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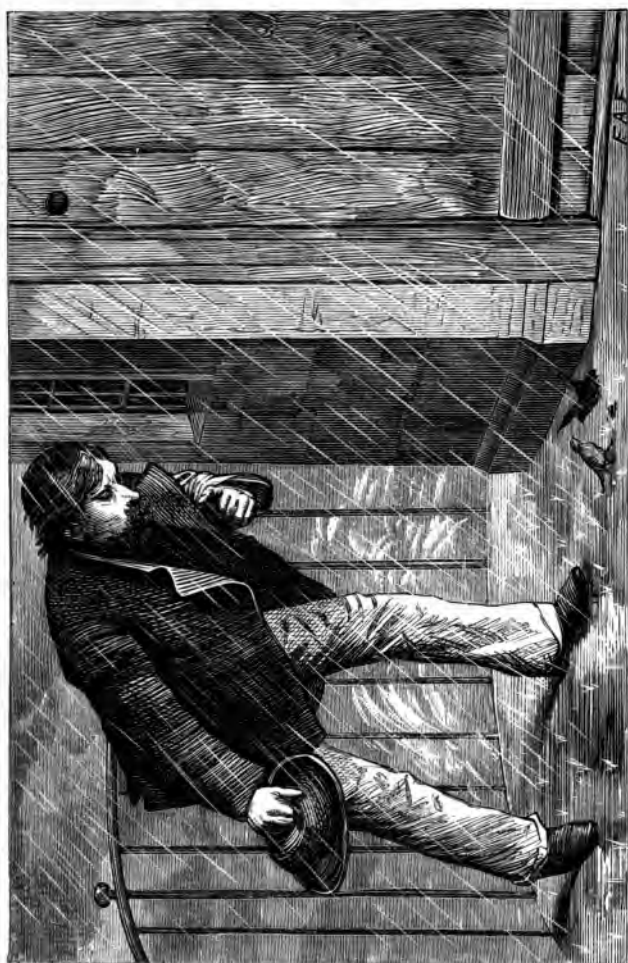
HOITY TOITY



THE GOOD  
LITTLE FELLOW







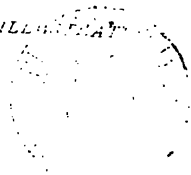
# HOITY TOITY

THE GOOD LITTLE FELLOW

CHARLES CAMDEN

*Author of "The Good Little Fellow"*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON

JOSEPH S. KING & CO., CORNHILL

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BY

CHARLES CAMDEN

*Author of "The Boys of Axleford"*

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS



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# HOITY TOITY.



## CHAPTER I.

### *HOITY TOITY HIMSELF.*

**H**OITY TOITY wears a fool's cap, but Hoity Toity is no fool. Hoity Toity has a grim grey beard, but Hoity Toity is as young as ever he was, and there isn't a kinder heart than the one that beats like a little bird's under his little jerkin. Some people think Hoity Toity a fool because he does queer things sometimes; but they are foolish people themselves, who won't wait and watch until he has finished. And some people say that Hoity Toity has been laid up with the rheumatism for many a year; but they won't take the trouble to

look for him, or they might soon see him slipping in and out of the hedges like a little wren, whenever they take a walk. And some people say that Hoity Toity is a spiteful little toad.

I'll tell you how that is. Hoity Toity has a stick with two horns, which he calls Easum and Stoppum; for though he looks very grave sometimes, he is almost always a very merry little fellow in his heart. And this is the way he uses his stick.

One day he saw a little boy trying to learn his Latin grammar. He was in the second declension, and had shut his book, and was saying over *Dominus* : but he couldn't remember how the accusative ended.

"No, I won't look—I'll go over it again," said the little boy. "N. *hic* Dominus—G. *hujus* Domini—D. *huic* Domino—A. *hunc* Domin—e, is it? no, that's the vocative—well, I'll go over it again. Father told me not to look if I could help it, and I haven't half tried yet."

"Oh, you're plainly a case for Eas-um," said Hoity Toity, and he said *um* quite loud, whilst

he gave the little boy a dig in the ribs with Easum.

The little boy burst out laughing, though he didn't know what had tickled him.

"Yes, that's it," he cried—"A. *hunc* Domin-um. I wonder what brought it into my head all of a sudden."

Another time Hoity Toity saw another little boy. This little boy was a big bully, and he was going to thrash a little boy ever so much smaller than he was, little as he was ; but Hoity Toity tripped him up with Stoppum, and when he got on his legs again, though he felt inclined at first to give the littler boy a worse drubbing than he had meant to give before, he somehow grew ashamed of himself by the time he had brushed the dust off his knees, and he didn't.

"But that's no reason why people should call Hoity Toity a spiteful little toad." True, O King Solomon. But Hoity Toity is a very plucky little fellow, and when he sees grown-up people going to do what they would be sorry for afterwards, he hooks Stoppum round their instep, and brings them

down on their noses, just as he would you or any other little boy.

A good many of the grown-up people get very savage, and call Hoity Toity a spiteful little toad (and so do a good many of you youngsters, too), and they *will* do, after all, what they wanted to do. When they turn obstinate, Hoity Toity lets them have their way. He doesn't crow over them when they come to grief, but he can't help showing them his two-horned stick.

"There," he says, as he turns it about, looking as sad as a good little creature like Hoity Toity can, "you might have had this"—pointing to Easum—"but you would have this"—pointing to Stoppum—"and, after all, it has done you no good. But you've a chance yet, if you've only got eyes to see it."

Hoity Toity is a music and dancing master, and he teaches deportment too, but not like Mr Turveydrop. He never professes anything: he does it. He taught the birds and the brooks to sing, and the leaves and the lambs to dance, and the wind to play the harp, and the sea to play the organ;



HOITY TOITY UNDER HIS MUSHROOM.





and if we were to copy his manners, we should be the politest people in the world. And yet, for all that, Hoity Toity is to be found in some strange places, and he has some strange servants, and some of his dearest friends are most unfashionable people.

I was in a wood one day, lying in the deep green fern, just as if I had been floating in the trough of the deep green sea. Little wild-flowers trembled outside the fern here and there like foam-bells on a wave, and I was thinking how pretty they were, and wondering why there should be so many of them where scarcely any one ever came. But Hoity Toity loves bees, and butterflies, and birds, and living things of all kinds ; and so he gives them pretty drinking-cups, and variegated lamps, and carpets softer and more splendid than a treble-piled Persian.

We are apt to fancy that we are Hoity Toity's pets ; but, perhaps, that is only our conceit : though he is so very, very kind to us, when we will let him be, that it is not wonderful that we should fancy so. Still there are millions, billions, trillions,

quadrillions, quintillions of living things in the world besides the little thousand-millions of men and women, boys and girls, and babies.

If we were to have a universal-suffrage election to choose a king for the whole earth, we should not be able to carry our candidate, for all the other things would vote for Hoity Toity, and I am afraid that a good many of us would be silly enough to vote for somebody else.

Not that it would matter to Hoity Toity. He is king already without our votes—though, of course, he would like all his subjects to acknowledge him. He would be able to cut off Stoppum then, and use his stick for a sceptre. It would look more like a crook, you say, with only one horn on it? Well, a crook would just suit Hoity Toity's taste.

Talking about crooks, though, my wits have gone wool gathering. Where was I? Oh yes, lying in the woods, looking at the pretty flowers.

I saw something there that didn't seem so pretty—a big whitey-brown mushroom, that looked like a surly fairy's gig-umbrella. It was speckled on the top like a plum-pudding, but if I had eaten it,

I should never have tasted a mince-pie again. It was a poisonous fungus—and yet there, at the very root, sat Hoity Toity, looking quite at home.

Presently a lean little lizard—like a fairy crocodile—writhed over the mushroom, and put down his head, and looked at Hoity Toity with his bright little beads of eyes, just as Carlo looks at you with his big brown ones, and licked Hoity Toity's face with his lithe leathery little tongue, just as Carlo gives yours a moist rasp with his pink nutmeg-grater.


Hoity Toity whispered something to the little lizard, and away he went, flicking Hoity Toity on the nose with the lanky tail he whisked about like a whip-lash. I couldn't help thinking that the lizard might both have come to Hoity Toity, and have left him, in a more respectful manner; but Hoity Toity didn't seem to mind a bit. He knew that the lizard was only in a hurry to learn what he had to do, and then in as great a hurry to be off to do it.

As soon as the lizard was gone, a staghorn beetle came crawling over the grass, crooking out his legs like a Life Guardsman walking up and down at the Horse Guards. Hoity Toity didn't hurry him,

but waited patiently till he had crept up to Hoity Toity's ear, and didn't flinch when the beetle laid hold of the lobe with his horns. Hoity Toity whispered something to the beetle too, and then the beetle seemed to remember that he had wings as well as legs. He lifted up his wing-cases, as hard as nut-shells, and shook out the crumpled gauze underneath like a little boy fussing over a crushed kite, and as soon as he could get under way, away he went, booming in a blind hurry.

He hadn't gone far before he ran foul of a beech-tree, and down he tumbled like a beech-nut. More haste less speed, you know, sometimes. Hoity Toity gave a funny little smile when he saw the beetle tumble down, and yet he looked rather anxious till he saw the beetle get up again, and go booming on once more—but not blowing his own trumpet quite so loud, and making boards instead of driving stem-on into beech-trees.

The beetle, you see, had learnt from experience the impenetrability of matter. I am sorry to say, though, that he forgot his lesson nine or ten times before he got to the cobbler's. Hoity Toity began



to finger his stick, but at last the beetle was out of the wood, with nothing but the cobbler's window-panes between him and the cobbler. Then Hoity Toity sat down again, and looked rather sadly at one little leaf left at the end of a long branch.

"Ah, I'll see to my poor shepherd myself," he said. "My little lizard must have got to my poor tailor by this time, and honest friend beetle can't well go wrong now."

But Hoity Toity saw me looking at him as if I thought him a very fine little fellow, and Hoity Toity can't bear to be praised by those who do nothing but praise him, and he hates to be idle. He has got a notion, indeed, that if he were to cease to work he would cease to be, and the round world would shrivel up like a pricked bladder. So off went Hoity Toity like a lamplighter. No lamplighter, though, can trot as fast as Hoity Toity, or make such bright lights leap out in such dark corners. He uses his two-horned stick as the lamplighter uses his wand. Easum is the kindler, and Stoppum is the extinguisher; for Hoity Toity is obliged to put out lights sometimes—the very

lights that he has lighted. The people who are left in the dark can't make it out at first; but, as they feel about in the dark, they often lay hold of the thing Hoity Toity wanted them to lay hold of, but they have never laid hold of before, though Hoity Toity lighted their lamp just to show them the way to it.

When Hoity Toity was gone, I looked at the big whitey-brown mushroom, and it seemed ever so much prettier than it did before, for Hoity Toity, who is always doing something, even when he seems quite idle, had cut his name on the stalk.

And then I went to see the tailor. It was easy to find him out, for there was only one tailor in those parts, and his name was Zephaniah Shears. It was a sunny afternoon, and the little lizard was basking on Zephaniah's threshold, looking up now and then with his shy bright little eyes, as if he was saying to himself—

“It might do you some good if you'd take some notice of me, but I'm in no hurry; take your time, take your time, brother Zeph.”

It was no wonder that the little lizard looked at



ZEPHANIAH SHEARS.





the tailor as if he thought him a big brother, for Zephaniah looked just like a big lizard in man's clothes, he was so long and lean.

Zephaniah was saying to *himself*, "I wish I knew the wood where the guineas grow like wild apricots, for I've got no money. But that's silly talk. I must work for my wages. And what work have I got to do? Just two jobs. Here's Farmer Stubbs' velveteen breeches to seat, and that won't bring me in much, big as he be. And here's the old scarecrow coat I got to make into a jacket for Widow Wasp's little boy, and that won't bring me in anything. Not even thanks; she'll say I've boggled it because she is a lone, lorn woman. Well, I think I shall do the breeches first. Old Zeph must look after himself. There's nobody else to look after him."

But just then Zeph looked up and saw the lizard, and he felt ashamed.

"Yes, there is," he said, contradicting himself as gruffly as if somebody else had spoken. "There's the same to look after me as looks after that little thing, and I'll do the jacket first. Farmer Stubbs

has plenty more breeches, but little Bob Wasp has only got his shirt to cover his back, and that's like a colander. I'm glad I found this old thing in the ditch, for I couldn't have afforded to buy cloth for the little chap. Ragged as it is, it ain't rotten, and I'll see if I can't make him look as spruce as a little squire. One of these days I may stumble on a trouser-piece for him. I can make him a waistcoat out of the cuttings of this, for poor little Bob ain't very broad in the chest."

And so Zephaniah spread the old coat on his board, and took out his chalk, and put his head on one side, and made his marks as knowingly as a writing-master flourishing a ciphering-book, and then he got his shears and began to cut.

"Why, what's this?" he cried, presently, as he picked something out of the fusty old lining. "Well, I'm blest if it ain't a five-pound note! And if I haven't been and gone and cut it in two! Ah, I see what that means—the widow must go halves."

And, without waiting to put on his hat, Zephaniah rushed over the green as fast as his long legs would carry him—they looked as long





BENJAMIN BRADAWL.

and as lean as a shadow's legs—to Widow Wasp's cottage, and the lizard went back to report progress to Hoity Toity.

The cobbler lived close by the tailor, and *his* name was Benjamin Bradawl. He was thicker in the body than Zephaniah, and thicker in the head too. He was a very obstinate old fellow, was Benjie. Staring through his great horn spectacles, he looked as wise as a beetle. Benjie was the only thing like a beetle in his shop when I peeped in. The staghorn was still blundering about somewhere on the road. Perhaps Hoity Toity sends his swiftest messengers to those who are readiest to receive them.

Benjie was holding up an old boot that sadly wanted soleing, and upper-leathering too, for that matter. Benjie had not made the boot, and so he was growling over it scornfully.

"Just like all them town-made things," he said; "might as well wear wet brown paper. I don't know how I'm to mend the thing. Who's to know where to begin and when to leave off? Folks ought to be ashamed to go shod like that.

It ain't respectable. Why didn't your father pitch it to the pigs?"

"Please, sir, he hain't got any pigs to pitch it to, and if he had he couldn't afford to pitch away his boots," answered the little boy to whom Benjie spoke. "Father's stopping at home till you've done it, and if it ain't done the first thing in the morning, he'll lose his place, for he won't be able to take round the letters."

"That ain't true," said Benjie.

"Please, sir, I wouldn't tell a lie," said the little boy.

"Don't you tell me no more of them," said Benjie. "You and your father is both a bad lot. So you be off." And Benjie threw the old boot out of doors. The little boy ran to pick it up, looking very sad. Just after he had got outside, there came a great thud against the window.

"What do you mean by throwing stones at my window, you wicious young warmint?" shouted Benjie. And he rushed out, and was going to box the little boy's ears, when again he heard a *thud thud, thud*, like the tap of a drum, on his window-

pane. Benjie stared through his horn spectacles as if he was frightened. Whilst he was staring, something came against his spectacles with such a bang that it almost broke one of the glasses. He clapped up his hand to his eye, and when he had opened it, he called out, "Blowed if it ain't a beetle"—and he was so much astonished to find that *he* could make a mistake, that the beetle flew away before he could kill it.

Perhaps he wouldn't have killed it, though. At any rate he gave the little boy a penny to buy marbles, and picked up the boot and took it back, and waxed his thread, and began to work away for the poor postman just as if he had been the squire.

Hoity Toity, you see, had sent Staghorn to teach Beetle Benjie not to be quite so sure that he was always right and everybody else always wrong. Hoity Toity teaches all kinds of scholars all kinds of lessons, and sometimes he engages very funny ushers.

It was getting evening now, and when I had crossed the green I went along a lane, and so got



on to a common. There I met a beautiful, grand lady, with a little portfolio in her hand. The lady had lost her way, and she asked me if I could tell her which turning she must take.

"I have been sketching," she said; "and it seems just as if some one had been drawing me on by making pretty pictures for me to copy. Sometimes a branch was lifted up for me to see the blue hills in the distance, and sometimes a briar-spray was bent down into a fairy-bridge with two butterflies fluttering over it, sometimes one thing and sometimes another, until I quite forgot myself. I haven't the least idea where I am. I was never here before."

It was that sly little Hoity Toity who had been making pictures to lure the beautiful grand lady on. He wanted to please her, for one thing, because she was good as well as beautiful; but he wanted her, too, to meet somebody else he loved. Sly little Hoity Toity!

Presently the lady said, "Oh, look at that lonely little cottage—yonder where the rough hillside comes down into the common—doesn't it look





THE SHEPHERD AND HIS PET LAMB.

beautiful in the red sunset? I must get a sketch of that before the sun goes down."

Whilst the lady was scratching away with her pencil, and scribbling down the names of all kinds of colours here, there, and everywhere, that she might know how to paint her picture next day, the cottage-door opened, and a man came out. He had to pass us; but he did not see us until he was close upon us, because we were in a sandy little hollow with furze-bushes round it. He was a great manly shepherd, but he walked as slowly as an old man. As he came nearer we saw that he was carrying a white lamb.

The lamb seemed to like to be carried, and was snuggling in his arms, and looking up in his face like a little child; but he was looking down at it, oh, so sadly, and when he came quite close we saw that the great manly fellow was crying.

"What is the matter, my poor man?" said the beautiful grand lady.

He looked ashamed at first at having been caught crying, but then he told the lady that he had lost all his sheep except this little lamb, and

now he was obliged to sell it, though it was so fond of him, and was his little Bessy's pet, and she had no mother, or brother, or sister, poor lonely little lass.

"I put off bringing it away till she was asleep," said the shepherd; "and now I feel as if I could hardly drag my feet along. Seems as if I was cheating both the little lambs."

"Take Bessy back her little lamb," said the beautiful grand lady. "Here is some money for to-night, and come over to Bountiful Hall to-morrow. I will make inquiries about you, and if I find you are as honest as you look, you shall be my shepherd. I've hundreds of sheep, you know."

So *that* was the little game Hoity Toity had been playing with the beautiful grand lady who went out sketching and lost her way.

Besides what I saw, Hoity Toity did scores of kind things that I didn't see that afternoon; and he went on doing them when the sun went down, and the moon and the stars came up, and the larks began to sing, and the sun looked out from the east once more, as fresh as if he had been sound asleep

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all night instead of shining thousands of miles away. Hoity Toity is like the sun ; he never goes to sleep, and he never gets tired.

“ But how can he do so much, if he is so little ? ”  
—Oh, he makes himself little that he may get close to the little things he has to look after.

## CHAPTER II.

### *THE TESTYS.*

**H**OITY TOITY is always at work—morning, noon, and night, spring, summer, autumn, winter—in his quiet way ; taking as much pains with little things as with great things, because he wishes everything to be done well, and can do the greatest thing just as easily as he can do the least thing. Indeed, I am inclined to think that things do not seem big or little to Hoity Toity as they do to us. His greatest thing, I fancy, is the thing, whatever it is, that is best done.

I am going to tell you a story about a few more of Hoity Toity's "little" doings. Sometimes, when I think of Hoity Toity, and feel as if I would give anything if I could do anything, how-

ever imperfectly, in Hoity Toity's "way," I am very fond of prying about for these little doings. At other times I forget all about Hoity Toity, I am sorry to say; do not think of him even when he is right before my eyes, doing what we call his greatest things.

In that parish I have told you about, in which Widow Wasp, and Zephaniah Shears, and Benjamin Bradawl, and Farmer Stubbs lived, there lived two other farmers whose name was Testy—Tom Testy and Sam Testy. They were brothers, and had once been very fond of each other; but they were the tenants of adjoining farms that did not belong to the same landlord. These farms dovetailed into each other in such a perplexing way that neither landlord knew exactly where one began and the other ended. So the two landlords were always quarrelling with each other whenever they chanced to meet, until once they quarrelled so fiercely that they determined never to speak one to the other again, but to go to law tooth and nail, —to fight by proxy like Kilkenny cats.

Tom and Sam Testy kept out of their landlords'



quarrel for a time, but it was not long. Each soon came to think that he was paying rent for land which his brother had the use of, and from thinking that, they went on to breaking down each other's fences, turning their cattle into each other's pastures, vexatiously impounding each other's cattle, and going to law with each other like their landlords. They quarrelled also when they met at market.

One market day, when Tom Testy was riding out of the Red Lion Yard, he met Sam, who was going in to get his horse. They had quarrelled before when they met in the corn market; neither had sold the wheat of which they had brought in samples; each was in a very bad temper. As soon as Sam saw his brother, he pulled out a red sample-bag with one hand, and shaking his other fist at Tom, called Tom a very wicked name, and said that he should have been able to sell that corn, if Tom hadn't been going about saying that the sample was a cheat. Then Tom had called Sam a very wicked name, and lashed him with his whip. And then Sam had pulled Tom off his horse, and the two brothers, who once said their prayers kneeling

close together in their little night-gowns at their mother's knee, had fought in the inn-yard until the very stable-helpers shouted "Shame," and the barmaid screamed, and the other farmers rushed out of the market-room and parted them.

When the two brothers were on such terms, you may suppose that there was not much love lost between Mrs Tom Testy and Mrs Sam Testy, and the little Tom Testys were told that they were to have nothing to say to the little Sam Testys, and the little Sam Testys were told that they were to have nothing to say to the little Tom Testys.

It was very sad. Even at church the two families only met to scowl at one another. Their pews joined, but at Christmas the little hedge of holly that was common to the two, did not seem to link together the brothers and sisters and cousins. Everywhere else in the church the glossy leaves and the red berries had a cheerful look, but there the prickles looked spiteful and the berries angry.

One moonlight Christmas-eve the curate was in the church helping the vicar's daughter to deck it out in its Christmas wreaths and sprigs and

bushes. They had almost finished. The dim old chancel window was almost blinded with a bower of evergreens, through which the moonbeams could only here and there find their way down upon the worn flagstones of the aisle. The altar-rails seemed to have been turned into holly branches. Wreaths of holly and ivy and laurel twined round the low, thick, round pillars, and hid the chip-nosed gargoyles. There were bright-berried sprigs in every candle-sconce. The front of the organ loft, and the brass rods from which its faded curtains hung, were bushed and sprigged. How the congregation would be able to see the vicar, and the curate, and the clerk next day, through the grove of holly that had grown over the pulpit, and the reading-desk, and the clerk's desk, was a puzzle. All the pews were decked, except the two in which the Testys sat.

"I always leave these for the last," said the vicar's eldest daughter. "It seems like wasting good Christmas to use it on such people. It is five years now since a friendly word passed between the two families—brothers too. You really ought

to do something, Mr Emberweek. Papa says that it is no good—that he has tried, but that interference only makes them hate one another worse than they did before. That is because dear papa is too gentle with people—doesn't make them mind. But you are fresh to them, Mr Emberweek, and not afraid, I think, to say what you mean. So, as you are going to preach to-morrow, I hope you will give them a good scolding before all the parish, and make them ashamed of themselves."

"Oh don't, please, Mr Emberweek," said the vicar's second daughter. "A Christmas sermon all about the Testys would be dreadful. They spoil my Christmas quite enough as it is, when I see them scowling at one another in church. I expect every moment that they will be flying at one another over the pew-front. What a pity it is the pews face! But then, if they were the other way, I suppose they would quarrel which should have the one that turned its back on the other. What silly people they are, to be sure! Quarrelling, when they might be so comfortable. It must be so troublesome to keep on being angry like that.

Just fancy having to begin as soon as you are awake, and never to leave off until you go to sleep again. It would soon tire me out. I'll tell you what we'll do—make a high hedge round them, so that their sour faces may not spoil other people's pleasure, and a good thick hedge between them, full of prickles, to make them keep the peace."

The curate and the eldest sister laughed at the energy with which she instantly set to work upon her hedges; but the youngest sister, a little girl who had been delighted with all the rest of the decorating work, did not like this part of it at all.

"Now, dear, do be a little brisker, or we shall not get done to-night," said the eldest sister to her, sharply. "Mr Emberweek is waiting, and so am I. Hand me up something—anything will do for these pews."

"Why, you lazy little puss," said the second sister, more good-naturedly, "just now you were sorry because we were so near the end; you weren't a bit tired, you said; and now that we're nearly at the end, you work as if you were half asleep. Find me a regular holly-bush, full of prickles—

there's one lying in the porch—I want it to keep the two brothers from giving each other Christmas boxes.”

As the little girl stooped to pick up the great holly-bough that lay in the porch, she was saying in her heart, “I don't think that *can* be the right way to try to make the Testys friends again—shutting them out from all the rest of the people at church on Christmas-day, with the leavings of the Christmas, and separating them as if they were two cagefuls of wild beasts.”

Just then the porch-door swung gently open, before a gentle breath of wind, and the wind's voice seemed to say, in a whisper that was low and yet quite plain—

“I don't think it is.”

*You* can guess whose voice it really was ; but at first the little girl was startled. She said to herself, however—perhaps without knowing it, she was only repeating what the owner of that voice was whispering to her still more softly—

“You need not be afraid of anything wicked, unless you are thinking bad things and doing

them, or wanting to do them; so I'm sure you need not be afraid of anything good, and I think the wind was good when it said that, when you're wanting to do some good. I do wish I could help to make those poor Testys love one another again.

"But I'm such a little girl," she went on, as she stooped to pick up the holly-bough—"such a little girl, that I can hardly lift this great thing, and I must not keep sister waiting."

To her astonishment, however, it came up quite easily. I think Hoity Toity must have given it a push with Easum.

She was carrying it along quite easily, but just as she was stepping into the church with it, it lurched heavily on one side. I think Hoity Toity must have given it a sly pull with Stoppum. At any rate, it brushed against the wall of the porch, and a startled robin flew out of its hole, and the little girl, startled by the sound of its wings, turned round. What she saw was a cosily bright window in the vicarage, shining through the round peep-hole that had been cut in the high hedge of the vicarage-grounds to give a look-out on

the road which lay between them and the churchyard.

*"I've thought of something,"* exclaimed the little girl, triumphantly. Up went the holly-bush as easily as before; and though the little girl thought she had been a long time away, her sister said to her, when she got back with the holly, "Well done, dear; you're working again now as you began."

When the work was finished, the curate and the three sisters went out of the church; and when the curate had locked the church-door, he gave the key to the youngest daughter, that she might carry it to the parish-clerk, whose cottage was on the farther side of the churchyard. She only went a little way, however, and then, having waited until she heard the vicarage-gate click behind the curate and her sisters, she ran back to the porch, unlocked the church-door as softly as the stiff lock would let her, and, taking out the key and leaving the door ajar, went up the moonlit aisle to the Testys' pews. There she picked up a pair of gardening scissors out of the basket that had been left for the clerk's



wife to take away when she came to sweep up the litter before service time next morning.

You remember the little girl had "thought of something" when she saw the vicarage window shining through the peep-hole in the vicarage hedge. *This* was what she had thought of—that she would make a peep-hole in her sister's thick hedge, so that the Testys might not be separated at church on Christmas-day as if they were two cagefuls of wild beasts.

But for a time she stood snipping nothing but the night air with her scissors; she could not make up her mind where to cut the hole.

She was standing in Mr Tom Testy's pew, on the hassock in front of young Tom Testy's seat, when a little breath of wind came sighing up the church, crisply rustling the evergreens.

"Cut where you see the hedge shaking most," she fancied the wind said, in just such a soft voice as she had heard in the porch.

Presently the evergreens between the Testys' pews were astir, but they seemed to shake most quite close to her; so there she began to clip away

the leaves, and soon she had made the prettiest little sly peep-hole you can imagine.

She put her head into it and whispered into Mr Sam Testy's pew—

“You will be friends, won't you?”

And then she ran into Mr Sam Testy's pew, and put her head into the peep-hole, and whispered back into Mr Tom Testy's pew—

“Yes, we will.”

And then she locked up the church, and took the key to the clerk's cottage, and went home, thinking, as she went, that her sisters would say that she was a little silly, if they knew what she had been doing; but feeling very happy, although she could not say exactly why.

Before I go on with my story, I must tell you that Mr Tom Testy's family consisted of a boy, Tom, jun., whom Mr and Mrs Tom Testy thought the handsomest, bravest, cleverest, every way most remarkable boy that ever was or ever could be created, and of a tribe of younger girls of whom their parents did not think very much, but any one of whom, their parents nevertheless maintained,

was worth a dozen of that "doll-faced chit," about whom Sam and his wife made such a ridiculous fuss. This doll-faced chit was their eldest child, Mary, whom Mr and Mrs Sam Testy thought the loveliest, kindest, cleverest, every way most remarkable girl that ever was or ever could be created. Their other children were boys of whom Mr and Mrs Sam Testy did not think very much, but any one of whom, they nevertheless maintained, was worth a dozen of that swaggering young coxcomb about whom Tom and his wife made such an absurd to-do.

Mary, you ought also to know, had only just come back to the village—on that very 24th of December I am telling about—after having been away two years, at school and at her grandmamma's. Well, on that moonlight Christmas-eve the Sam-Testy boys had been out sliding. There were plenty of ponds on their father's farm, but they preferred one called the Black Pool on their uncle's farm—partly because, if the ice broke, they ran great risk of being drowned, and partly because they would be trespassing, and yet their father

would not be angry with them if he heard of it; because this pond was in a vandyke of his brother's farm which he believed rightfully to belong to his own farm.

So to the Black Pool the Sam-Testy boys went, and there they had a glorious slide under the bright moon.

"Crack she'll bear, bend she'll break," shouted the boys, as they rumbled with their feet close together along the up and down lines they had cut out on the black ice.

"We'll come again to-morrow after dinner," said the boys, as they went away, "and bring Mary with us to see the fun."

In hard weather, there was sometimes a chance of a wild duck down at the Black Pool, and about half an hour after his cousins had left, Tom Testy, jun., went down to the Black Pool with his gun. The slides soon showed him that if any ducks had been there, they must have been effectually scared away. "It's those trespassing young vagabonds of Uncle Sam's," he said in a pet. "The poaching young scamps! they're always over here, rabbiting

or something. I shouldn't wonder if they come for a slide to-morrow afternoon ; but I 'll be here with a cart-whip and the dog, and give them a scare."

That was the merry Christmas which young Tom Testy wished his cousins, and Hoity Toity, who overheard it, was very sorry that the two brothers, not content with wishing each other dead, should have taught their children to hate one another.

That night, if anybody in the village had been awake to see it, he would have said that there was a sudden change in the weather about midnight. But no one *was* awake, because the church having no peal of bells, of course no ringers had to stay up to ring Christmas in, and everybody was in bed by eleven, and *that* was thought a dissipatedly late hour there, only excusable at Christmas-time.

The moon and the whole sky were clouded over, a warm rain fell, and a sudden thaw set in for a short time. That is all that the villager would have said, but I am given to understand that any one who had eyes to see him, might have seen Hoity Toity sitting by the Black Pool, weeping hot tears, that at first pattered on the black ice, but soon sank

into it, as he thought how wickedly miserable the people at the two farms were making themselves, when they might be so happy one with the other.

Before the villagers were up, frost had set in again, and a little snow had fallen—just enough to cover the ground and the faces of the treacherously refrozen ponds. “There’s been a little snow in the night,” said the villagers one to another, as wisely as if each were the only man in the village with eyes in his head.

The church had a larger congregation than usual. Villagers who very seldom went to church at other times, considered themselves bound to go to church on Christmas morning. In almost all the pews there were faces that, for one reason or another, were happier-looking than at other times. But the Testys looked much as usual, though there was that holly hedge between them. If it prevented them from being scowled at by one another, it also deprived them of the pleasure of scowling at one another. The second time they stood up, however, Tom in Mr Tom Testy’s pew, and Mary in Mr

Sam Testy's pew, both discovered at the same time the peep-hole the vicar's little daughter had made in the hedge; and both looking through it at the same time, each gave at the same time a little start. Instead of the silly little Miss Tom-Testy whom Mary had expected to see, there was handsome, manly-looking Tom, "so wonderfully improved" since she had seen him last; and instead of the plaguesome little Sam-Testy cub whom Tom had expected to see, there was Mary grown so beautiful that at first he felt quite dazzled. He soon recovered the use of his eyes, however, and, whenever Mary ventured to give a shy glance through the peep-hole after that, she found Tom's eyes fixed on her, and had to drop her own eyes again in a way that made Tom think her more beautiful than ever.

Mr Emberweek did not give the Testys a good scolding before the whole parish, as the vicar's eldest daughter had asked him. I do not suppose that he would have done so, under any circumstances, at her dictation; but, at any rate, he could not do so *that* Christmas, because he had written

his Christmas sermon before she asked him. It was a most learned and eloquent discourse, which greatly impressed the majority of his hearers.

"That there now," they remarked to one another, when they got out into the churchyard, "were summut like preachin'. 'Tworn't often I could make out what the young parson were a-drivin' at—he spake so fine, he du. He be book-larned, *he* be. 'Tworn't like the old vicar. Any fool could talk so as a t'other fool could make out every word he said."

Though it was such a grand sermon, and both Tom and Mary had been to school, and so could have understood a few, at least, of the "dictionary words," I am afraid that neither Mary nor Tom paid much attention to it.

Mary was thinking, "What a pity it is that such a nice boy should have such a disagreeable papa and mamma, and such foolish little sisters!"

Tom was thinking, "What a pity it is that such a swêet girl should have such a ruffian of a father, and such a termagant of a mother, and such little beasts of brothers!"



And then Hoity Toity, who was hidden in the holly, when he found that neither Tom nor Mary was paying any attention to Mr Emberweek, thought that *he* would turn preacher, and whispered to each, almost at the same time—

“What do you know of the people you are abusing? If you knew them better, perhaps you would like them better.”


Neither Tom nor Mary could make out where the words came from, except that somehow they came out of the holly.

After dinner, the Sam-Testy boys said that they were going for a slide, “and you must come with us, Mary—we’ll take care you don’t tumble—such a jolly slide—on the Black Pool—we were on it last night—wouldn’t Uncle Testy and Lord Tom be savage, if they knew!—and yet it’s our pond, isn’t it, father?”

“Well, be off, boys,” said Mr Sam Testy, “but Mary does not want to go; do you, Mary?”

Mary said no at first; but the boys pressed her so that at last she went.

When they got down to the pond, the eldest



two boys took her by the hand, and ran with her on to the ice. They had not gone far before it began to *crack, crack, crack*, in a very alarming way, and water oozed up and washed over it. "Crack she'll bear," the boys were shouting again, when the ice tilted under them, and the next moment they and their sister were in the water. The little boys on the bank set up a cry, and just then young Tom Testy climbed over the stile, and came running towards them. He could not give up the pleasure of scaring his cousins, but Hoity Toity had so far prevailed with him as to induce him to leave the dog and the whip at home.

"What business have you here, and what are you howling for, you young beggars?" he asked, very gruffly.

"Sister's in the pond," they answered, shaking and crying.

Away rushed Tom. He lay down on the ice, and caught hold of Mary's shoulder, but the ice broke under him, and *he* was in the water—holding Mary up, and trying to grasp the ragged edge of the water-hole, which crumbled in his clutch. At last,

however, he managed to get a firm grip for a short time, and giving a great heave, he lifted Mary out of the water on to the ice, on which her two brothers had already scrambled. In their fright they forgot all about Tom at first. Sometimes ankle-deep in, the water that rushed over the tilting ice-islands from and to which they leaped, they somehow floundered ashore. Then they thought of Tom, who was fast losing his strength in the chilling pond; but what could they do for him—except run home shouting for help?

They had not gone far before they met their father; and this was how it was he came to be out.

When his children had started for the pond, he had sat down chuckling over his boys' speech about Uncle Testy and Lord Tom, and intending to have a comfortable smoke. But Hoity Toity was in the room, hidden in an old-fashioned *pot-pourri* which had belonged to Mr Sam Testy's mother, and which he and his brother Tom, when they were both little fellows, had helped her to fill with rose-leaves—and quiet Hoity Toity was hard at work. Now, Mr

Sam's pipe wouldn't light, and next it wouldn't draw, and then again the patchwork cushion behind him would keep slipping down. At last up he got, and flinging his pipe into the fireplace, he said—

“I tell you what it is, wife—if our lads come across Tom's boy, there'll be a row, and we've enough o' them without fighting at Christmas. I'll go and bring the children home.”

When they saw him, they shouted, “Cousin Tom pulled Mary out of the pond, but he can't get out, father.”

“Run home, Mary, and get into bed, and, boys, tell mother to send a man, and some blankets, and the brandy-bottle,” said Mr Sam Testy ; and off he set for the pond at a rate you would not have supposed a plump farmer in top-boots could have run at. On his way he picked up three loose planks which were used for a foot-bridge across a ditch, and by means of these he managed at last to get Tom out.

But poor Tom was like a lump of ice. His eyes were closed, his heart seemed to have stopped beating, his teeth were so fast set that his uncle could

not pour a single drop of brandy into his mouth. So Mr Sam Testy muffled Tom up in the blankets, and Mr Sam Testy's man helped his master to carry Tom to the warm bed which Mrs Sam Testy had got ready for him. The doctor was sent for, and Mr Sam Testy had the horse put into the spring-cart and drove round himself for Tom's parents. At last, after a great deal of rubbing and so on, Tom opened his eyes; but he was ill for a good while after that. Mary and her brothers soon got over their ducking, but Tom had been so long in the water that it was not until the beginning of spring that he could leave his uncle's.

In the meantime all the Sam Testys got to be quite fond and proud of him, partly because he had saved Mary's life, and partly because they had saved his.

And the Tom Testys came to Mr Sam Testy's, and the Sam Testys came to Mr Tom Testy's, and first they learnt to endure one another, and after that they soon became friends. As Hoity Toity had said, when they knew each other better, they liked each other better.

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When the golden Lent lilies and the blue wild hyacinths were out, and willow-wrens were fluttering about the tops of the beeches, Tom was strong enough to walk home across the fields, and Mary and some of the Sam Testy boys walked with him.

"It seems strange that we should all be such friends now, doesn't it, Mary?" said Tom.

"It seems stranger to me now that we should have been such enemies," said Mary.

"You and I made friends first, didn't we?" Tom went on. "Do you remember the peep-hole in the holly, Mary? It was just as if it had been made on purpose."

There was some one on the other side of the hedge who could have told them that it *was* made on purpose. When people have been trying to do what Hoity Toity likes them to do, and he knows that it will not make them vain to learn that they have succeeded, he lets them learn it to encourage them; and so Hoity Toity had led the vicar's little daughter out for a walk in the fields that afternoon, and she could not help overhearing what Mary and Tom were saying to each other.

That evening Mr Tom Testy and Mr Sam Testy were standing together by the Black Pool.

"I used to claim this, Tom," said Mr Sam, "but I don't care about it now—it would have drowned my Mary if it hadn't been for your Tom."

"Nor I don't care about it neither," answered Mr Tom. "It would have drowned my boy, if it hadn't been for you, Sam. I shall get my landlord to drain it, and fill it up so as a plough can go through it. And whilst he's about it, Sam, don't you think it would be a good thing if him and your landlord could come to an agreement about shap-ing off the farms better?—give and take, you understand. They must be sick of lawing by this time, and I'm pretty sure they'd come to terms, if you and me could hit upon a friendly plan—and we can do that now, can't us, lad?"

"Ay, Tom, and I'll come to your place, and talk it over to-morrow. Do you mind yon hedge, Tom? That's where you fished me out of the ditch, and gave me blackberries to stop my blubbering when I was a little 'un."

As the brothers shook hands and said good night,

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the birds in the hedge, that had been twittering themselves off to sleep, suddenly began singing again ; as if the thought had struck them that they had gone to bed far too early on such a lovely night.

Hoity Toity was listening in the hedge, and had waved his staff for joy.



## CHAPTER III.

### *THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.*

THE blacksmith's name was Andrew Anvil, and he had a good deal of the anvil in his nature too. He whistled as merrily over his hard work as his anvil clinked beneath the heavy hammers that came down on it. But Andrew's heart was anvil-hard for all that, and anvil-cold until it had been warmed, like an anvil, by a tremendous amount of hammering. He prided himself on being able to earn a good living by cheerful hard work, without help from any man, and so far, Hoity Toity did not find much fault with him. But Hoity Toity did not like the conceited way in which Andrew took *all* the credit of his pleasant position to himself, and looked down on those of his fellow-villagers who could get no work, or only

very poor work, or who whimpered over work they found too heavy for their strength. Andrew never thought of helping or cheering such people, he only despised them.

"My poor Andrew," said Hoity Toity to himself, "I shall have to lay you on your back before I can properly lift you up. I shall have to give you a deal of pain before I can make you see what a deal of pleasure you are losing by your present ways of going on. They won't do, Andrew, for other people's sake or your own either. You think yourself a very fine fellow, and fancy that other people think you a fine fellow too; but, outside your own family, I am afraid that there is not a soul in the village that really cares a button for you, so far as love goes. I must put a stop to this unnatural state of things, however you may have to smart, my poor Andrew.

That evening Hoity Toity was lurking in the village smithy; listening delighted to the musical roar of the ruddy forge, and the musical clank-clink-clink of the hammers that bare-and-bulgy-armed, leathern-aproned Andrew and his journey-

man brought down on the glowing iron, tongs-held on the anvil between them ; listening, sometimes pleased, but oftener pained, to the gossip that was going on between the bright-faced, dark-backed, round-shouldered rustics who were lounging on the sills of the smithy's unglazed, flap - shuttered windows, and lolling as far in as they could get, without coming bodily inside.

"Widow Wasp's been at it agin," said Benjamin Bradawl.

"What's she been a-doin' of now?" asked Nicholas Notherpot.

"Stealin' as usual—that's all," answered Benjamin ; "a couple o' turkey-poults, and Farmer Stubbs swears, he do, he 'on't stand it no longer."

"Well, most like, the poor 'ooman was hungry and she's a lot o' mouths to feed," said Nicholas, who was very charitable towards all offenders whose offences did not affect himself, and who considered himself such a model of character that he thought he had sufficiently justified any line of conduct when he had hinted that, under similar circumstances, he might have acted in the same way.

"I like a drop o' good beer, I do, and if I wanted a pot, and hadn't the money to pay for it, and Mother Wheatsheaf oodn't chalk it up to me, I can't say but what I might think o' helpin' myself to it if I got the chance. Farmer Stubbs is a rich man—what's a couple o' turkey-poults to the likes o' him?—and Widow Wasp's as poor as a church-mouse. He ought to be ashamed o' hisself, Farmer Stubbs ought. Ain't it a shame, Zeph, for a rich man like he to be hard on a poor widdy?"

"Rich or poor," answered Zephaniah Shears, lifting up his lean, long neck, "I don't see as anybody's got a right to steal, and Farmer Stubbs 'oodn't be rich long, if everybody as was poor thought they'd got a right to take his things away, just because he'd got a lot of 'em."

"Ah, he's a customer o' yourn," retorted Nicholas; "that's why you talk like that. He ain't a customer o' mine. I never did a stroke o' work for him, and never want to; he'd skin a flea for its hide and taller. I wonder at ye, Zeph. What you git out o' Stubbs can't pay ye for your work, let

alone your speakin' up for him. I'm astonished at ye, Zeph, that I am, and I don't mind your hearin' me sayin' of it—you that make out that you 've a soft heart for them as is sufferers. What I say is this, and that I 'll stick to, and nobody can't deny—that them as has got a lot of a thing should be willin' to give a little of it to them as has got none of it."

Now, when a man is talking sense so as to make it nonsense, and is trying to get credit for being kinder than he is, Hoity Toity is very fond of making him look silly with a joke. So Hoity Toity put it into the head of young Bill Pearson, whom Nicholas Notherpot had crowded away from the smithy window, to say—

"Well, Nicholas, *you*'ve got lots o' room, and I should like a little of it—I hain't got none."

It *must* have been Hoity Toity who put that into Bill Pearson's head—he couldn't have said it of himself, because poor Bill was half silly.

The other men began to laugh at Nicholas. He growled out "Git along" to Bill, and did not give Bill any more room until he slipped off to the

Wheatsheaf. However, in the meantime, he held his tongue.

In the meantime also Zephaniah Shears had said—

“But I were a-goin’ on to say, neighbour Bradawl, that I don’t believe Widow Wasp’s been a-stealin’ turkey-poults or anything else. The poor widdy’s tongue is rough, and that I ’on’t deny, and she do look cross enough sometimes to turn new milk; but I never knew her steal nought, and I ’on’t believe she ’ood.”

“O Zeph!” answered Benjamin, “everybody knows you’re as blind as a bat—wise as you think yourself, poor chap. Don’t *I* say she’s been a-stealin’, and when were ever *I* wrong?”

Just then Hoity Toity steered a beetle stem-on against Benjie’s nose, just as before, you may remember, he had sent one full-butt against Benjie’s spectacles. It made Benjie remember that he *had once*, at any rate, been wrong—about the postman’s little boy—and he added, less positively—

“Well, all I can say is that I heared this afternoon that Widdy Wasp had stolen two o’ Farmer

Stubbs's turkey-poults, and that Farmer Stubbs 'oodn't stand her goings on no longer. *I* don't want to take away the widdy's character—she hain't much to lose, *I* should say—'twas you, and not me, Zeph, that said she were a old witch as cross as two sticks—she couldn't jump over 'em."

"No, neighbour Bradawl," answered Zephaniah Shears, "*that* I didn't say, I know. I don't believe in witches. I'm sorry I said anything about the poor woman's temper. I might ha' said that I 'oodn't believe she'd steal, without dragging her temper in. Her bein' poor 'oodn't be no excuse for her stealin'; but, perhaps, 'tis for her bein' crusty at times."

"What are you chaps jawing about?" asked Andrew Anvil, resting his chin on his hammer.

"Oh," cried one of the outside crowd, "here's Muster Bradawl says Widdy Wasp's been a-stealin' Farmer Stubbses's turkeys, and old Zeph Shears 'on't believe it!"

"Zeph's a old fool," answered Andrew. "If Zeph was to live to be a Methusilee, he'd never die worth a penny-piece. 'Tain't much an old bag o'

bones like him can 'arn, and what he do 'arn he gives most part away on. You're a fool, Zeph—I ain't afraid. What I say of a man behind his back, I'll say afore his face. Ain't Widdy Wasp as poor as a church-mouse? Of course, she'll steal—all poor folks will, instead of 'arnin' an industrious livin'. What a fool of a chap you was, Zeph, to give her two-pun-ten out o' that fippun-note you got! You'll never git such a chance agin—it'll be long afore any customer o' yourn will owe ye five pounds that he's willin' to pay. What call had ye to give half of it to her, just because you found it, when you was makin' clothes for her beggar's brats for nothin'? More reason why you should have kep' it, you old fool! You *are* a old fool, Zeph, and that everybody knows, and says behind your back; and I don't mind tellin' ye so to your face."

"Mighty brave, bullyin' a weak old man like Zeph—call them of your own size fools, and see what you'd git by it," muttered Andrew Anvil's stalwart, sulky journeyman, Sampson Sledge.

Sampson had long felt sulky against his master, because, although Andrew gave him a few pence



more a week than was offered him by the rival master blacksmith from "the shires," to prevent him from going over to "the furriner," Andrew was very fond of depreciating Sampson's skill and strength; although Sampson believed, and a good many of the villagers more than half-believed, that Sampson's skill and strength were, at least, equal to Andrew's; and that, if it came to a trial of strength, Andrew might possibly come off second-best. If Sampson had not been village-born and bred, and had not, therefore, fully shared all the village prejudices against "the shires," he would long before have gone over to "the furriner," and snapped his fingers at his co-villager former master.

Big Andrew was no coward, and, therefore, he felt savage with himself for having spoken bump-tiously to an old man whom he could almost have blown away like the downy-winged seeds off a dandelion stalk; but the consciousness that he had been playing the part of a braggart-bully only made him the more wild against the man who had told him, before Andrew's "public," that he had done so.

"I'll call any man a fool to his face," shouted Andrew. "*You're* a fool, Sampson Sledge; the biggest stuck-up fool I ever came across."

"All right," answered Sampson, coolly. "Come outside," he went on, "and we can have it out; or, if you're afraid of the constables—I ain't—we can go into the traverse, and do it quietly there. Pick any of these chaps you like to come in and see fair play."

To be defied in this coolly taunting way by his journeyman, before people who, Andrew thought, had looked upon him up to that time as the village hero, made Andrew for the moment mad. He swung his heavy hammer over his shoulder, and, rushing at Sampson, aimed a murderous blow at his head. But Hoity Toity tripped Andrew up with Stoppum, and he fell heavily on a jumble of ploughshares, harrows, and nail-rods.

When Andrew was lifted up, he was a poor, bleeding, broken-ribbed creature. Zephaniah Shears, who was the first to run in to help him, was a giant in strength in comparison with him. With help from Easum, he lifted Andrew off the

iron that had crushed him, and then the other neighbours came in to help him. At first Sampson Sledge was for going away without giving any assistance to the man who had behaved so badly towards him, but Hoity Toity hooked Stoppum round his instep, and Sampson stayed to help to carry Andrew to bed. Sampson went for the doctor also ; but the very next morning he went over to "the furriner." He wasn't going to work for a man that had tried to murder him, he said ; and what was Andrew's wife to *him* ? She wasn't *his* wife, and she was pretty nigh as peacocky as her husband.

It was a poor look-out for the Anvils. For months Andrew could not do a stroke of work. Now and then his wife got a stray journeyman to work in the smithy ; but "the furriner," with Sampson to help him, soon secured almost all Andrew's customers. The money that he had laid by in the bank had to be taken out to pay for rent and rates, clothes and food ; and besides there were heavy doctor's bills to pay. Andrew got no help from the benefit society, because he had been

too proud to belong to it. *He* would always be able to support himself, he had said, and he wasn't going to waste his money in keeping a lot of sick folk and skulkers in idleness. Mrs Anvil had enough to do in looking after her husband and her children ; and even if she had had time for other work, and had been willing to take any she could get, I am afraid she would have had great difficulty in getting it, because she had made herself so much disliked in the time of her husband's prosperity. The little Anvils were too young to earn money, and altogether Andrew thought that his affairs were in a very bad way ; and most people were of the same opinion. Hoity Toity, however, was of quite a different opinion.

Things went on getting worse with the Anvils, according to general opinion. Mrs Anvil began to sell all the things she could get rid of. She looked very shabby and careworn, and the little Anvils often looked as if they had not enough to eat.

Nicholas Notherpot pitied the children loudly at the Wheatsheaf, and said it was a shame that

they should have to suffer for their father's fault; but he never gave them anything. Sampson Sledge and "the furriner" and Benjamin Bradawl now and then gave them a bit of something to eat, when they happened to see the children passing their cottages at meal-times. So did others of the villagers—poor cross Widow Wasp included; indeed, though she talked as if she grudged it, she gave more than the little Anvils got from most of her wealthier neighbours. Zephaniah Shears more than once went without his dinner to give the young Anvils one.

"You'll git no thanks, Zeph," growled Benjamin Bradawl, when he came to hear of it. "That graspin' old raven of a father o' theirs 'ood be the fust to call ye a fool, and they're chips of the old block, you may depend."

"That they ain't," answered Zeph; "and if they was, I couldn't help feedin' the young ravens when they *cry*. And what right have you to call Andrew a old raven? Anyhow, he ain't one now. His sickness has softened him wonderful."

"Anvil were about right;" Benjie growled back.

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"You was born a fool, Zeph, and you'll die one, and no mistake about it."

Zephaniah Shears was the only villager who at first went inside the Anvils' house after the doctor had doomed Andrew to a lingering illness.

"No," said the rest, "they never cared for we, and we ain't a-goin' to care for they. When their pride's broke, let 'em come upon the parish, as their betters, as they've turned up their noses at, has had to do."

Scarcely anything but kind looks and kind words could Zephaniah Shears take into the blacksmith's. At first both Andrew and his wife felt indignant at Zeph's impudence in taking upon himself to pity the likes of them; afterwards Andrew came to like Zeph's cheerful sympathy a little, but Mrs Anvil was more than ever disgusted with it, because it was *only* looks and words. At last, both husband and wife, cut off from all sympathy but Zeph's, amongst those of their own class, began to look forward to a drop in of the cheery lean old tailor more eagerly than they anticipated a chance visit even from the kind old vicar.

Zephaniah Shears was Hoity Toity's pet minister to Andrew Anvil and his wife ; and, in Zeph's own phrase, they "softened wonderful" under his preaching—preaching of which Zeph was quite unconscious, because Hoity Toity, in his sweet, sly way, took upon himself the whole task of "making the application" of the daily sermons.

Benjamin Bradawl was not the only villager who at first received Zeph's reports of the "softening" of the Anvils as merely superfluous proofs of the incurable softness of his own brain ; but Zeph went on pleading the cause of his clients without any heed to the ridicule his pleading brought upon him, and his advocacy told at last.

At starting, the villagers had said, "Oh, yes ; it's easy enough for stuck-up folks to eat humble-pie when they hain't got nothin' else to eat."

But Hoity Toity went about with Zephaniah—in his otherwise empty pockets, perhaps—and at last the villagers began to say—

"Well, anyhow, Zeph's a good old chap ; and, perhaps, he ain't quite such a fool as he looks. Anvil was harder on him than ever he was on us.

If Zeph don't bear no malice, there ain't much reason why we should. Anyhow, we might go and see whether what Zeph says is true or not."

And they did go, Sampson Sledge one of the first; and they found Anvil so different from what he had been, that they went on to say—

"Well, Zeph was about right; and, anyhow, Andrew was a hard-workin' man, whilst he could work, and it do seem hard that such as him should come upon the parish just as he's got a chance of workin' hard agin, if he could only wait a bit."

By this time Andrew could get about a little, but otherwise there was no improvement in his circumstances. He was still very weak. His wife had sold almost everything that she could sell. Quarter-day was at hand, and no money was ready for the rent.

Hoity Toity went and had a quiet talk with Sampson Sledge, who had succeeded "the furriner" as master of the rival smithy. Sampson did not know who had been talking to him, because Hoity Toity had talked to him in his sleep. Whilst he was snoring like a rhinoceros, Sampson had dreamed



a dream, in which all kinds of things, new and old, were mixed up. Old Zeph was in the dream, and what Sampson remembered of it when he woke was old Zeph's having said to him, "Why can't ye be always friends?"

Sampson felt in a good temper when he woke, and went on to remember that old Zeph had said those very words ever so long ago—in the days when Sampson Sledge was a little boy, and Andrew Anvil a big boy, very fond of bullying him. Then he remembered exactly *when* it was Zeph had so spoken. Andrew had been teasing little Sampson, and little Sampson had picked up a jagged stone to throw at him. Whilst he was dodging to get out of the way of the stone, Andrew had tumbled backwards, and little Sampson had run to stir him up with his toe, crying out—

"Get up. I won't fling at ye whilst you're down."

Then old Zeph had made his appearance, and, when he had reconciled the boys, had gone away, saying—

"Why can't ye be always friends?"

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Directly after breakfast, Sampson started for Andrew Anvil's.

"Muster Anvil," he said, when he got there, "it's along o' me somehow that all this has come upon ye. I don't say it's all my fault, because it ain't, but I should like you to shake hands with me to show you don't bear me no more malice than I bear you."

"Well, there, now," cried Sampson, when the hands had gripped, "lookie here now, Muster Anvil. You've been a fust-rate smith, and you'll be a fust-rate smith agin, some day, when you've picked up your strength; and your smithy's where the country's work's been done I don't know how long; and I never fared comfortable in that little new-fangled furriner's shop. They say you've got to leave, and I should like to come back here; but I don't want folks to say that I've turned ye out, nor I don't want to neither, Muster Anvil. Lookie here, Muster Anvil, let's go partners, Muster Anvil. I'll manage with a boy till you're able to take your share of the work, and then we'll settle how we're to share the money."

It was somewhat galling to Andrew to be saved from the parish by the generosity of the ex-journeyman he had formerly snubbed, and, eventually, since he never became again the strong man he had been before his "accident"—Hoity Toity doesn't believe in "accidents"—to have to become, in fact, the "junior" partner of his younger fellow-craftsman; but Andrew was very grateful for the new chance of earning his own living Sampson had given him.

Andrew did not earn so much money as he had earned before, but hard-up fellow-villagers, who deserved to get it, got a good deal more from him than they had ever got before. He was not kotooed to as he had been in the days of his proud strength, but he was *loved*; and Hoity Toity thought that weak Andrew was far better off than strong Andrew. Andrew soon owned to Zephaniah Shears that *he* thought so too; and Mrs Anvil did not contradict him, which was equivalent, in her case, to a full confession of her being of the same opinion.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.*

“JOHN RUDDOCK, you bad, wicked boy, you’re always fighting. Where do you expect to go to, sir?” said Dame Darnaway, who was the village schoolmistress. “Come here this minute, sir, and I’ll warm you. I’ll larn ye to be so fond of using your fists.” And as she spoke, Dame Darnaway took down a huge new rod, nearly as big as a middle-sized birch-broom.

Dame Darnaway very often had a new rod, and before it could be rightly called an old one, it was quite worn out. Most of the poor old woman’s little scholars were very unruly and very lazy, and she thought that the only way to make them mend their manners and mind their books was to whip them all round, like the old woman who lived in a shoe, and to keep on scolding them at the top of

her voice, as fiercely as if they had just robbed a church and murdered the parson and the clerk.

John Ruddock left off using his fists on his school-fellow, put them up to his own eyes, instead of Sam Choodle's, and tried to screw a tear out to quench the wrath of his schoolmistress. Experience might have taught him that it was labour thrown away.

"Do you hear me, John Ruddock?" thundered Dame Darnaway, if an old woman with a cracked, shrewish voice can be said to thunder.

Of course John Ruddock heard, but the only sign of heeding that he gave was to take his fists out of his eyes, and plant them underneath his ears, at the same time planting his elbows obstinately upon his knees.

"If you don't come this moment, I'll take the skin off your back!" screamed Dame Darnaway.

John Ruddock, as the fighting boy and authority-defier-in-chief of Dame Darnaway's establishment, to keep up his character, had been dangling his heels with as much contemptuous carelessness as he could put on, under his form; but when the

dame made one step towards him, brandishing the big new rod, he slipped one leg over the form, and gave a glance at the door to see whether it was open.

Dame Darnaway, finding that he meditated flight, rushed at the door, and banged it to, and set her back against it, just as naughty John Ruddock reached it. Then a tussle took place between John and his schoolmistress, in which for a time it seemed that naughty John would get the better of it.

He was a tough little urchin, who only came to school when he was not wanted for crow-keeping, and such other farm-work as he was fit for. He considered himself a man, because he wore a little smock-frock, a little red-plush waistcoat, a little pair of corduroy breeches, a little pair of brown-leather buskins, and a little pair of heavy-soled boots laced more than half-way up his legs—with the big-nailed toes and iron-shod heels of which naughty John Ruddock, who had not been taught chivalry in Dame Darnaway's school, mercilessly belaboured the poor old woman's shins.

She conquered at last; and then, shaking all over with passion, proceeded to execute judgment on her contumacious pupil.

Although he did keep on wriggling like an eel, when she had got him across her knee, her long and familiar experience of the child's frocks, which most of her scholars wore, soon enabled her to get the little smockfrock up in a wisp under her left arm; but, owing to John's wriggling, the little pair of corduroy breeches baffled her. With rod and fist, however, she laid on to him wherever she thought she could hit him hardest; and in ten minutes' time pushed him before her by the collar into his place—a smeared-faced, sobbing, tingling, sullen little culprit, subdued only until her blows should have ceased to make him smart, and he should have got a better opportunity of rebelling against her authority.

Although Dame Darnaway did not teach chivalry, Dame Nature—that is one of the names which Hoity Toity lets himself be called by—he does not mind what he is called, so long as he gets his work done—Dame Nature, then, had taught Sam

Choodle a little. When Dame Darnaway first began to pitch into John Ruddock, Sam Choodle had felt pleased, because he knew that John Ruddock would have licked him if Dame Darnaway had not interrupted their fight ; and, although he also knew that *he* had been to blame in that particular quarrel, he remembered a good many times before in which John Ruddock had bullied him without the slightest provocation. But when Sam saw John shoved back by the collar into his seat, the angry old dame still cuffing his red ears, Sam could not help muttering, "'Twas me as riled him."

Dame Darnaway no sooner heard Sam Choodle speak than she turned on him, glad of an excuse for leaving off scolding and cuffing John Ruddock.

"You're every mite as bad as him," she cried, and then she began to box poor Sam Choodle's ears.

John Ruddock couldn't stand *that*.

"'Tworn't Sam's fault," he said, fiercely, when he had held his breath that he might not sob in saying it.



Dame Darnaway's wrath when she heard John, whose part she was trying to think she was taking, finding fault with *her*, boiled over once more.

"One's every bit as bad as t' other," she shrieked, and she knocked the two boys' heads together until her arms ached almost as much as the boys' heads ached.

School business, begun in that pleasant way, was not likely to improve as it went on. The rod was worn away almost to a stump before the morning was over, half the children were "standing on the form" at the same time, and the Dame had to make half-a-dozen fresh fools' caps. She said that her scholars had never behaved so badly, or been such dunces before ; and she was right. Perhaps the reason was that even she had never been in such a bad temper before.

Even sweet-tempered little Mary Marjoram, who was almost always at the top of her class, caught the rod, and had to stand on the form with the fool's cap on that morning.

Mary had spelt a word right, but the dame had not heard her properly, and so she passed it on.

The next girl spelt it just as Mary had spelt it, and was told to take her down.

"If you please, 'm, *I* said that," respectfully explained little Mary.

"Go down to the bottom this minute, you bad gal," screamed Dame Darnaway. "How dare you tell me such a wicked story?"

Little Mary was a favourite with all her classmates, although she *was* almost always at the top of the class. When they saw that she could scarcely keep from crying, they all joined in saying that she had spelt the word properly. Even the girl who had taken her place said so. Then *she* was sent down to the bottom of the class, and poor little Mary got a whipping for being, according to Dame Darnaway, an "obstinate little story-teller," and had to mount the form in a fool's cap, for, according to the same authority, not knowing her lesson, and the whole class was "kept in." More than half of the school was kept in, and as they could not make out what for, most of them were so sullen and so saucy that I fancy Dame Darnaway was as much punished as they were.

At last the dame's cuckoo-clock struck one ; the young malcontents, who were just on the point of mutinying, were dismissed, and Dame Darnaway, in a very uncomfortable frame of mind, sat down to her lonely dinner.

Fortunately it was Saturday, and so there was no afternoon school. If there had been, I am afraid that after such a morning there *would* have been a mutiny in the afternoon.

When the dame had washed up her platters and put them back on her little dresser-shelf, she took up her knitting and sat down in her patch-work-cushioned arm-chair ; but she had been too much ruffled to enjoy her half-holiday in peace. Besides, John Ruddock had come on to the village-green after dinner with some bigger boys ; they were shouting and laughing, and Dame Darnaway couldn't get it out of her head that they were making fun of her. They were really only enjoying their game of cricket, but the sound of their voices irritated Dame Darnaway so that she fussed about in her cottage like an angry wasp.

She was very unhappy, and Hoity Toity, who

was watching her, and who does not object to see bad-tempered people, for their own sake as well as others', made unhappy by their bad temper, for a time made no attempt to comfort her. He had seen and heard all that had taken place in the schoolroom in the morning, and thought that Dame Darnaway deserved her unhappiness. He was not pleased, mind, with the children who had wilfully teased her, but he wanted to teach the schoolmistress that hers was not the right way of going to work with her scholars to make them better—that children's naughty tempers cannot be cured by grown-up people getting into a passion.

For a time Dame Darnaway went on getting only worse and worse tempered, stinging her self like a tortured scorpion, according to the old story. But at last Dame Darnaway grew sad instead of savage, and then Hoity Toity took pity on her.

John Ruddock gave the cricket-ball what, for a little boy like him, was really a tremendous drive. John was very proud. He didn't know that Hoity Toity, who wanted to get him and his playmates

out of the way, had helped the ball on with Easum. The ball whizzed like a cannon-ball at the head of Long-field-off. He jumped up to catch it, missed it, was derisively shouted at as "butter-fingers!" and the ball whizzed on into a far-off jungle of broom, and fern, and furze. John and the boy who was in with him, stretching their legs almost at right angles to their bodies, were just getting their third run when a cry of "lost ball" was raised. Both ins and outs started to hunt for it, and, as they could not find it, the green in front of Dame Darnaway's was quiet for the rest of the afternoon.

When Hoity Toity took her in hand, she was sitting in her arm-chair almost ready to sob. Like Mrs Gummidge, she felt lone and lorn, and she also felt that she had herself to thank in large measure for her liveness and loneliness.

So long as Hoity Toity can comfort people, when he thinks that comfort would really do them good, he does not mind what humble lodgings he takes. He got into Dame Darnaway's little glazed brown tea-pot. When the dame heard the lid rattle, she said—

"Ah, I'll have a cup o' tea now. P'raps it'll do me good, after all the worrit I've had this day."

So she made the tea and drank it, and it was so extra good that it cheered as well as calmed the old woman.

"And now I'll go to my son's," said Dame Darnaway.

She went to her son's almost every Saturday evening with a bundle of darned socks, and perhaps an apple or two, or a sugar-stick, and so on, for her grandchildren; but that Saturday, before she took her tea, she had felt so "out of sorts" that she had been thinking of staying at home.

"I'll go to my son's now," said Dame Darnaway, as she made up her bundle.

When she got to her son's house, he, as usual on Saturday night, was at the Wheatsheaf; but Zephaniah Shears was in the cottage. He had brought home a mended pair of trousers for little Tom Darnaway, and was having a chat with the children and their mother.

Zeph was young Mrs Darnaway's uncle, and Dame Darnaway had often felt jealous of him,

because, although he did not give them so many things, or let them have their own way half so much as she did, her grandchildren seemed fonder of their granduncle than they were of their grandmother. That evening, as soon as they had taken possession of the sweeties their grandmother had brought them, they all ran back to Zeph.

"It's a pity you hain't no children of your own, Mr Shears," said Dame Darnaway, rather tartly.

"So I've been inclined to think sometimes, Mrs Darnaway," answered Zeph; "but no doubt it's all for the best. Still children do seem a blessing."

"Blessing! I wish you'd to do with them I has to do with in my school, Mr Shears, and you'd soon be tired o' your blessing!"

"I don't doubt it's a great charge, Mrs Darnaway."

"Oh, of course *you* know all about it, Mr Shears. Bachelors' wives and old maids' children—and bachelors' children, too, I s'pose—everybody knows is perfection. Mariarann there that's settin' on your knee, wouldn't be quite as fond of ye, p'r'aps, if you knew what the real bother o' children is—

been worried out o' your life by 'em, as I've been this very day, Mr Shears, whilst you's been a-settin' cross-legged like a chaney image, without nothing to cross your temper."

The effect of Dame Darnaway's cup of tea, though Hoity Toity *had* made it so good, was beginning to evaporate. The sight of little Maria Ann, her pet grandchild, snuggling her chubby cheeks, made sticky by *her* sugary gifts, up to Zeph's lizard jaws, grievously annoyed Dame Darnaway.

For a moment Zeph felt inclined to answer tartly, but Hoity Toity had brought him to the cottage to do Dame Darnaway good, and so Hoity Toity prevented him. The touch of invisible Stoppum tickled Zeph's lips, and he answered with a merry smile—

"If I be a chaney image all day long, Mrs Darnaway, it's all the nicer of a night to be able to stretch my legs, and to have a pretty little gal like this a-settin' on one of 'em. I don't doubt but what you must ha' been a nice pretty little gal like your gran'-dayter when you was as young."



Zeph did not mean any satire, but his compliment was rather equivocal.

Did you ever hear the story of the clever little boy whose cleverness annoyed a crusty old gentleman?

"Yah-h-h," growled the crusty old gentleman, "your clever little boys are always more stupid than other folks when they grow up."

"What a *very* clever little boy *you* must have been, sir!" retorted the saucy young urchin.

But dear old Zeph didn't want to say smart things. Even if he had known how, he was such a good-natured old fellow that he would not, I think, have liked to get a name for saying smart things that could make the people to whom he said them smart. What Zeph wanted, after he had felt Stoppum at his lips, was to make Dame Darnaway feel comfortable.

"There, poppet," he said to Maria Ann, when he had kissed her, "you go and set on granny's lap. She's a dear, good, kind granny, ain't she? She allus a-bringin' you goodies, and makin' you stock-in's and mendin' 'em for you. Why, here's another

taty granny 'll have to cover up," added Zeph, tickling the bare heel that chafed against the leather in one of Maria Ann's little shoes.

"Oh, you'd better stay where you was so comfortable," Dame Darnaway said at first, when little Maria Ann toddled up to her. But she soon took the little girl on her knee, and listened to Zeph in a better temper.

"I'd almost forgotten your breeches, Tom," he said; "and that would ha' been a pity, wouldn't it? now you've been and gone and torn your Sunday ones so as you can't wear 'em to-morrow. Your mother ought to git the blacksmith to make you a pair o' iron breeches, Tom. I never see sich a boy for tearing his clothes. It's lucky I thought to bring the pair as I'd got. I'd a'most forgot 'em. Leastways, I hadn't exactly forgot 'em, but I thought you wouldn't want 'em, and I was settin' down to have my pipe in quiet. It was queer, niece, how the breeches come into my mind. I see the housekeeper at the hall going over the green, and she'd the squire's poodle with her, and he'd been fresh-shaved, and he was a-shiverin' in his behind,

for the wind blows cold to-night; and that made me think of little Tom somehow—how he 'd feel if he hadn't got no breeches. So I've come, and I'm glad I did, for it ain't often now I git a chance of a talk wi' Mrs Darnaway."

The shivering poodle, you see, was another of Hoity Toity's queer messengers.

Dame Darnaway, with little Maria Ann on her knee, and old Zeph talking in that polite way, grew more and more gracious. After the miserable morning and uncomfortable afternoon she had passed, she felt pleased at being in a room in which she had not to use the rod in order to be "thought somebody." Still for a time she continued to be rather angry with Zeph, because her grandchildren plainly thought more of him than they did of her.

The fact was, that though they liked her petting, they did not respect her any the more for it. They could not make it out, it began and ended so suddenly. She did not slap them, but she could scold even her grandchildren pretty fiercely when they "grew tiresome" or "sarcy." Zeph, on the other

hand, did not stand upon his dignity. He joked and romped with the children, and when he had to blame them, spoke quite quietly; and yet they minded his quiet speaking almost at once, whilst they sometimes made faces behind her back at granny in the middle of her fiercest scoldings.

When the children had all been washed and tucked up in their beds (Zeph tucked in little Maria Ann, and had a bolstering match with Tom), Dame Darnaway said—

“You’d never do to keep school, Mr Shears. The children ’ood git the better on ye; you’d let ’em do just what they liked. I’m half sorry little Tom is gittin’ big enough to come to school, for I know he’ll aggrawate me, and then I shall have to whop him, though he is my grandson. Now I s’pose you wouldn’t have no flogging in your school, Mr Shears?”

“Well, Mrs Darnaway,” answered Zeph, “as you was sayin’ I’ve got no children o’ my own, and so p’r’aps I don’t know much about what’s proper for ’em. It’s easy for them to talk as hasn’t got to do. But my fancy is, that if I had got a

school, I'd have as little flogging as I could, and wouldn't never flog till I was about sure that I wasn't makin' the young uns howl jist to relieve myself becós they'd riled me. Little gals I know I couldn't whop. P'raps 'tis right their mothers and their schoolmissuses should whop 'em when they're naughty. P'raps 'tis and p'raps 'tisn't. Anyhow, a man as lays his hand on them little tender things ought to be whopped hisself, I says. I'd as soon pitch into a bunch o' primroses. Little boys, now, I expect, is different. They's tougher, and p'raps it's needful to make 'em smart now and then. I think I could bring myself to whop a boy if he'd been doin' what was downright bad, lyin' or stealin', or sich. But I wouldn't whop him jist for larkin', which is boys' natur', or not knowin' his lesson, 'cept he'd set his back up *not* to larn it. I'd whop him then, but not if he was a sort I thought I could make ashamed of himself by talkin' to him. Lovin' ways goes farther with children than lickin's, I fancy, Mrs Darnaway. Not but what there's some, I don't doubt, you must lick. I'd have a rod in my school, but I should be best pleased

when I see the dust on it. But, law! here I am a talkin' to you, as has to do wi' all kinds o' children. You're right in sayin' I shouldn't do for a school-master, Mrs Darnaway. When I was a-lickin' a boy as I thought desarved to be licked, I should be thinkin', 'You're a nice sort to be hidin' him. If you was to git your desarts, wouldn't *you* be havin' a jolly hidin'?'."

Zeph's talk at first made Dame Darnaway think that he must be what she called "a infiddle," but the memory of the way in which her grandchildren "took to" him, and the polite way in which he apologised for talking about children to a school-mistress of her experience, and carried her lantern for her when they went back to the village together, puzzled Dame Darnaway. The "infiddle," after all, though he did talk "silly nonsense," seemed to be a very well-meaning, respectful kind of man.

Dame Darnaway would have liked to go to sleep as soon as she got into bed that night, but Hoity Toity would not let her. Feathers worked out of her bedding and tickled her, mice scampered and nibbled behind her bedroom walls, and Dame Dar-

naway lay awake thinking of Zephaniah Shears and his odd words and ways. At last she fell asleep and dreamt that John Ruddock was her son, and that she was crying because he had a big hole in his nose, which she was trying to darn with her rod for a needle, but which went on getting bigger and bigger until Zephaniah Shears, who was somehow John's big brother, came and took away her rod and threaded a sugar-stick for her.

When Dame Darnaway woke, she could not help laughing at the notion of darning a boy's nose with a sugar-stick ; but her dream, for the first time in her life, had given her a really kind feeling towards John Ruddock, and when she met him in the churchyard after morning service, she spoke so good-naturedly to him, that astonished John made great capital O's of his mouth and eyes.

On Monday morning Dame Darnaway had made up her mind to try an experiment—she would see whether she could not get through one day without any flogging. To help her, Hoity Toity had put the old rod inside her kitchen-fender. She lighted her fire with it, without noticing what it was, and



DAME DARNAWAY'S SCHOOL.





when school-time came, it was too late to get another.

Dame Darnaway did manage to get through that day, even a whole week, without any flogging ; but it was terribly hard work at first. The school-mistress had been so accustomed to trust almost entirely to the rod for obedience, and the scholars to care for scarcely anything but the rod, that, without it, at starting, school-business sprawled limp, as if it had lost its backbone. Dame Darnaway was often during that week tempted to make a rod out of her birch-broom, but Hoity Toity always managed to hide the broom when she wanted it for flogging purposes.

Next week, although Hoity Toity still kept the rod out of the way, things fell more into gear. John Ruddock was the first to behave better under the new system. He didn't mind minding an old woman half so much when she no longer offended his dignity by flogging him every day "jist as if I was a babby ;" and when the arch-rebel had submitted, the others soon became obedient.

I do not mean to say that Dame Darnaway *never*

used the rod after that ; but it was kept locked up in a cupboard instead of being hung up over her head ; and when it *was* brought out, it was thought a far more dreadful thing than it had been when it was in sight and in use every minute.

When Hoity Toity next came round to the village as school-inspector, he was far better pleased than he had been before, both with the school-mistress and her scholars.

## CHAPTER V.

### *IN THE CARRIER'S CART.*

**H**OITY TOITY, of course, is at work all over the world, and, strange though it may sound, at all kinds of places—in London and Labrador, Paris and Peru, Calcutta and Cape Town, the Sandwich Islands and Sydney—at the same time. But I will keep to what he did at the village in which we first made his acquaintance together—at any rate, to what he made the people who lived in that village think and say and do. And that reminds me that I have not told you yet what was the name of the village.

It was Samplestead ; and Gregory Geeup was the Samplestead carrier. Every Wednesday and Saturday he drove his tilted cart, or rather the old roan horse that drew it, to and from the market-town.

"Silvertail" was the name of the old roan, because he *had* a silver-coloured tail, and a silver-coloured mane as well. On Wednesdays and Saturdays the grey-maned old horse clumping along the lanes and turnpike-road, and the grey-tilted old cart, that bobbed up and down between the hedges as if it were playing bo-peep with the fields, were almost as good as a clock to the people who lived between Samplestead and the market-town—a good deal better, at any rate, than some of their cottage clocks, which were often an hour and a half too fast or too slow, and meant four when they struck fifteen.

Gregory prided himself on his time-keeping. If Silvertail slackened for a moment from his shambling trot into a walk—at which, most likely, he could have gone almost as fast—Gregory jerked his head and hit his plump stern with the end of the reins. To reach the principal landmarks on his route always exactly at the same time was Gregory's ambition, and he regulated his stoppages accordingly. If he had a good many calls to make between these landmarks, he would fling



GREGORY GEE-UP AND 'SILVERTAIL.'



out his parcels and put down his passengers without drawing rein. If he had only one or two, he would pull up, and dawdle in a way that made his passengers fidget.

"Contrac'-time, contrac'-time," he would croak in explanation, using a phrase which he had picked up from the newspapers. But since Gregory's time-contract had only been made with himself, or, at most, between himself and Silvertail—and since, also, his passengers would have had no objection to reach their destinations over contract time so long as they could have been put down comfortably, and most certainly would have preferred reaching them under contract time to dawdling on the road, Gregory Geeup's peculiar punctuality was not very popular; but, like most of the Samplestead people, Gregory was very pig-headed, and since there was no opposition-carrier, he had his customers at his mercy.

At the last stroke of eight A.M. from the Samplestead church, Gregory drove out from his own yard, and at the last stroke of four P.M. from the Dial church, whose face stuck out over the market-town



High Street like a huge frying-pan, Gregory drove out of the "Ship" yard; and once started, he boasted that a matter of life-and-death couldn't make him pull up, if pulling-up would keep him from reaching his next road-mark true to time.

He thought that this was something to be proud of, and, of course, punctuality *is* a virtue (doesn't the copy-slip say so?)—more than half the railway accidents take place because one or other, or both, of the trains that crash together are not true to time.

But circumstances alter cases. There was no reason why Gregory Gceup, under all circumstances, should reach the market-town and Samplestead at exactly the times he had fixed upon with himself, and therefore there was no reason why he should be proud of doing so—especially since he often did unkind things in order to keep up his reputation for his pig-headed punctuality.

A good thing put to a bad use, and the putter claiming credit for the goodness of the thing if properly applied, is a state of affairs of which Hoity Toity highly disapproves.

Gregory Geeup, in spite of his time-keeping whim, was, in the main, a decent carrier, and therefore Hoity Toity did not wish to deprive him of his business by starting an opposition cart. Hoity Toity knew that there was not business enough between Samplestead and the market-town to support two carriers. But Hoity Toity was determined that what business there was should be carried on, so far as Gregory Geeup was concerned, in a kinder and more common-sensical manner. Accordingly, one Saturday morning, Hoity Toity rode out of Gregory's yard as the last stroke of eight hummed from the dim-faced clock of the ivy-clad village church, seated as an unseen passenger in a corner of Gregory's cart.

It was a bright May morning. The green meadows were pearled with daisies and spangled with golden buttercups and dandelions. As the cart jolted past the vicarage, the fresh scent of just-cut grass was wafted into it, for one man was mowing the lawn and another was sharpening his scythe, making a noise so much like the call of a cock Guinea fowl, that the vicar's three Guinea hens

were running about hunting for their lord. Rabbits were nibbling the young wheat in the corn-fields, and now and then a great brown Jack hare, lolling his long ears in a careless way that showed he was not very much frightened, lazily cantered off between the green-lined stretches. Other fields were blue-green with young beans, and others blazing sheets of golden blossom. Where peaty soil was being burned, sunlit lavender smoke hung over the ground like gold-shot gauze, or indolently streamed away in almost level wreaths. Birds were singing everywhere, bees were buzzing, white butterflies were flitting about, lambs were flinging up their heels, calves were capering with twisted tails, and in the squire's breeding-paddock slim blood-foals were running races of their own accord, and then galloping back to butt their aristocratic noses into their plump, long-tailed, ungroomed dams.

Most of the trees were in the first freshness of their full foliage, stray blossoms were struggling out on the pagoda-like spires of the horse-chestnuts, there were dreamy patches of May blossom

in the hedges, and the cottage gardens were purple with flags, and luscious with the scent of golden, rust-hued, and blood-red, velvet-bloomed wall-flowers. It was the kind of morning when it is a luxury merely to breathe, and see, and smell—when one wonders whether heaven can be more beautiful than earth, and all the dreary lives that are led, and all the cruel deeds that are done on earth, are quite forgotten in the country's lovely peace—the kind of morning when even cantankerous people congratulate themselves on the discovery that they really possess angelic tempers.

And yet Gregory Geeup was in a furious bad humour. Silvertail's "breeching" had been in want of mending, and the village saddler had only sent it back just in time to enable Gregory to save his credit for punctuality in starting. The saddler had been ill, and had got up early, ill as he was, on the Saturday morning, to mend the harness; but Gregory made no allowance. The breeching had only been sent back just in time to enable him to drive out of his yard at the last stroke of eight, and so Gregory, who had been fidgetting like a hen

when the ducklings she has hatched have taken the water, growled at the poor saddler like a bear with a sore head.

“Kit Crupper’s a lazy, stuck-up scamp,” he said to Dame Damson, who lived on the profits of her little orchard, and who was the only visible passenger he had just then. “Crapper’s above his work, because theer’s ne’er another in the parish to do it. If he goes on in this way, though, I’ll see if I can’t get another chap to come and set up agin him. I’ll let him know that he shan’t keep *me* waitin’.”

“Sure, Master Geeup, you wouldn’t take the bread out of poor Christopher’s mouth,” answered Dame Damson; “and him with all them children, and so ailin’. And he did send it back in time after all; and glad enough I were, for I’ve got to catch the Lunnon coach. You’ll drive a bit faster to-day, won’t ye, Master Geeup? It ’ud break my heart if I was to miss it.” And Dame Damson began to cry.

“I’ll put ye down at the Ship at a quarter to ten—not a minute later nor sooner for nawbody,”

Gregory snarled back ; "and then if ye step out, you 'll have just time to catch the coach, though that ain't no business o' mine. I've got to keep my contrac' time—that 's my business."

"But you know why I'm so keen to git to Lunnon, Master Geeup?"

"Mayhap I doos, and thinks ye a old fool for your pains ; but that ain't no business o' mine anyways. I've got to keep my contrac' time—that 's my business. Not but what I've a right to think that you're a fool for not mindin' youen, instead o' wastin' your time and the little money you've put by—every penny, I'll go bail—on that young scamp of a grandson o' youen. Though it's as likely as not, if you git to Lunnon, and he hain't sailed, you'll git your pocket picked, and lose your thirty pounds afore you git sight of his officers."

"Oh, don't 'ee talk like that, Master Geeup," sobbed poor Dame Damson ; "and my Tom's not a scamp. I'd pay a 'underd pound, willin', if I'd only got it, to buy him off, and keep him from goin' to them horrid furrin' parts abroad. It were only because he couldn't git nothin' to do, and

couldn't abear to live on me,' that he 'listed, dear boy ; and then he 'oodn't write till he thought it 'ud be too late for me to do anythin'. A dear kind boy to me, he were, when he 'd got his wages ; and he hain't got no father nor mother, and he's the only one now that belongs to me in the wide world. Oh, do 'ee git me up in time for the coach, Master Geeup. If I can but git sight of him, they shan't part us. Down on my bended knees I'll go to the officers ; and if they *will* take him, they shall take me too ; and I don't suppose they want to have old women in the army."

"There's a many of 'em in it a'ready, the papers says," chuckled Gregory ; and mollified by his joke, he grew for a time better tempered. But when he was within a quarter of a mile of Bullford Black Boy, and, having taken out his watch, had found that he must stir Silvertail up a little in order to reach the inn true to time, something occurred which ruffled him again.

An old man, standing dressed in his Sunday best outside his garden-gate, called to Gregory to stop.

"Stop, indeed," Gregory scornfully shouted back. "If you wanted to go in with me, you should ha' gone on to the Black Boy. I shan't stop afore I get there—not for nawbody."

"But I want to see my poor gal, as is in the hawspittle," piped the old man.

"That ain't no business o' mine," answered the carrier. "I've got to keep my contrac' time—that's my business."

The old man tucked up his white smock-frock, and began to step out after the cart, as fast as his lean spider-like legs, cased in green velveteen breeches and brown leather buskins, would carry him. He was a very weak old man, however, and besides that, his tall Sunday hat fell off, and he dropped his horn-spectacles; so that he was soon obliged to give up hope of catching the cart. Dame Damsen at first felt half-pleased that Gregory would not stop, because she was so anxious to catch the coach; but Hoity Toity was close by her, and when she looked back, and saw the old man turning to go home again, she took pity on him, and said—



"Oh, do 'ee stop, Master Geeup, for the poor old chap. He do look so disapp'inted."

"That ain't no business o' mine. I've got to keep my contrac' time—that's my business. You was in a great hurry to get on just now. Why worn't the old fool waitin' at the Black Boy? I shan't stop not for nawbody till I get theer."

As Gregory said it, he leaned over to give Silvertail a rap with the end of the reins, but before he could do so, Hoity Toity gave *him* a sly poke with Stoppum, and tumbled him into the road. He was not much hurt, but by the time he had righted himself and taken the reins again, the old man had been able to catch the cart.

For the first time for many a year, Gregory was behind time at the Black Boy. Hoity Toity kept on playing Gregory tricks. He pushed a basket of eggs and butter out at the tail of the cart with Stoppum (taking care, however, to steady it down with Easum); he hooked a shoe off Silvertail; he unbuckled the bellyband; he made a flock of sheep block up the road. I can't tell you all the tricks he played.

Astonished Silvertail had often to go at a canter, but still Gregory was a little behind time at all his roadside stopping-places. The question now was, whether he could reach the Ship in time. He took out his watch.

"Yes, we can do it," he said to Silvertail, "if you step out, old hoss; but what's the good o' gittin theer at contrac' time, when we've been behind time everywheres else?"

Then Hoity Toity whispered something to Gregory. He started, looking half-puzzled and half-pleased.

"I fare as if I was downright dazed to-day, missus," he said to Dame Damson. "If we don't git to the Ship till contrac' time, you'll never catch the coach. Tain't azackly my business that; but, since my time's got all abroad to-day, I'll git in afore my time for once in a way. Kim up, old hoss!"

Silvertail, more and more astounded, had to go the last mile at what, for him, was a gallop. The ostler at the Ship was as astonished as Silvertail when Gregory rattled past the inn-yard ten minutes before he was due there. He drove

Dame Damson to the coach-office, he dropped the old man at the hospital gate, and, after all, drove into the Ship yard precisely at contract-time.

Gregory's peculiar idea of punctuality had received a shaking. In spite of his failures on the road, he felt better pleased with himself than he had felt for a long time. As he drove out of the yard at four in the afternoon he saw the old man whom he had dropped at the hospital hurrying towards him.

The ostler began to think that it must be "Doomsday in the afternoon" when Gregory pulled up for the old man.

He was so full of gratitude to Gregory for the pleasure he and his "poor gal" had had in seeing each other, that Gregory felt very much ashamed when he remembered how he wanted to leave the old man on the road; and so he wouldn't let him pay his fare back.

On the following Wednesday Gregory drove Dame Damson and her Tom to Samplestead, and the dame was so grateful to Gregory for getting her up to Lunnon just in time to save her Tom

from them horrid furrin parts abroad, that Gregory made up his mind to give up his odd plan of time-keeping altogether.

He continued to be a punctual carrier—as punctual as was necessary ; but Hoity Toity had made him commonsensical and kind as well. As a rule, he still started from Samplestead precisely at the stroke of eight, and from the Ship yard precisely at the stroke of four, but it was no longer a rule without reasonable exceptions ; and on the road he stopped or stirred up Silvertail as need required—no longer merely to gratify his “laws-of-the-Medes-and-Persians”-like whim about “contrac’ time.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE VILLAGE SCAMP.*

**T**HERE were a good many scampish boys and hobbydehoys in Samplestead, but *the* scamp of the village was Black Bob.

Bob was a long, lithe, gipsy-like young fellow, who was almost always getting into scrapes, and so got the credit, or rather the discredit, of even more scampishness than he was guilty of. When anything wrong had been done, Black Bob was always the first person suspected; and if it turned out that somebody else had actually done the wrong, Black Bob, nevertheless, was still believed to have been "at the bottom of it."

"That chap worn't born to be drowneded," the steady-going Samplestead people used to say of him, slowly shaking their sage heads. "Theer's a hemp neckercher waitin' for *him* somewheers."

Even the scampish Samplestead people were shy of being seen much in Black Bob's company. He was "sich a owdacious out-an'-outer," they said, "theer was no knowin' what he might be up to next, and the quality and the keepers 'ud be sure to be down on them as they see last with un."

The only friend Black Bob had in the parish was the old grandmother who had brought him up when his father was transported for the manslaughter of a gamekeeper, and his mother had died leaving him quite a baby. Bob's grandmother had not brought him up very wisely. She had not sent him to school, but had let him run as wild as a young marsh-colt. Still, in her way, she had always been very fond of Bob, and Bob, in his rough way, was very fond of her.

Although the Samplestead people thought the old woman almost as black a sheep as her grandson, and the "respectable folk" amongst them would not have darkened her door for any consideration, Hoity Toity every now and then paid a visit to her cottage. He had a liking for Black Bob and his grandmother, though they were such dis-

reputable people. He had a great pity for poor Black Bob, whom no one had tried to teach to behave properly, except by punishing and scouting him for all the ill-behaviour of the parish.

The old woman was a "squatter" on a sandy, peaty waste dotted with firs and furze, fern, broom, heather, and brown bog-pools. Her cottage was a thatched hovel, half mud, half brick, with more old-hat than glass in the tiny windows, standing in a little plot of potato and cabbage ground in the loneliest part of the waste.

One sunny morning Hoity Toity, hidden in a heap of heather which she had gathered, sat watching the old woman, who was making heath-brooms outside her cottage-door.

"I wish Bob wor at home," she was muttering to herself. "He wor out agin last night, and if he goo on in that owdacious way, he'll be ketched, sure's fate. I'm allus afearin' I shall hear he's killed a chap, like his father afore un. Ah, my boy wor a man, and so's Bob; not like them sneakin' chaps that pockuts the money and gits him to run the risk. I wish Bob wor at home."

By and by Bob slouched out of a clump of fir-trees, with his hands in his pockets under his smock-frock. He was chinking some money. When he came up to his grandmother, he pitched a handful of silver into her lap, saying as he did so—

“Theer, granny, that ’ll pay thee better than thy besoms. Now thee canst go down into the street and git thee tea and sugar and snuff.”

The old woman’s eyes flashed for a moment at the sight and sound of the sparkling, splashing coin ; but then she said discontentedly—

“Eh, lad, money’s money, but this is nowt for thy week’s work—riskin’ thy neck to fill other chaps’ pockuts. They makes pounds out o’ the game, and gives thee a few shilluns.”

“What’s come to thee this marnin’, granny ?” the young poacher asked with a grin, and then, dropping on the heap of heather, began to bawl at the top of his voice—

“ Oh, ’tis my delight  
On a shady night  
In the season of the year.”



"Hold thy tongue, Bob, thou fool!" cried the old woman anxiously, and yet looking half proudly at the young fellow as he lolled on the heather, trolling out his song in the quavering bellow—like the voice of a sentimentally agitated bull—which may be heard proceeding from rustic beershops on Saturday nights. "Hold thy tongue, Bob. Thee'll bring the keepers and the constables on thee."

"Who's afeared? Theer's nowt to show for what they'd like to lay agin me, 'cept the money. And hain't I as much right to money as them, or any man? I bain't bound to tell 'em how I got it; though, if it come to that, I arns mine honester than their'n. Hain't I a right to ketch wild things? But what right's they to try to break a man's head for arnin' his honest livin'? The sneakin' curs, they'd swear my life away, once they got the chance!"

"I know they would, Bob. That's what I'm a-spakin' to thee about. S' far as I sees, thee'st as much right to the birds and things as any man. They belongs to them as can ketch 'em, s'far as I sees. But that bain't what the Lawer says. It's only rich folks, and them they pays, may kill the





BLACK BOB AND HIS GRANDMOTHER.

things, accordin' to Lawer; and if poor folks tries, the Lawer's sure to ketch hold on 'em some time, if the keepers doesn't kill 'em fust."

"Who cares? A short life and a merry un," said Bob. "Theer's none as I've got to miss me." And he began to bawl his song again.

"Hold thy tongue, Bob!" once more said his grandmother. "Thee'st got I to miss thee," she went on. "Thee'st all as is left belongin' to me, and though folks gives thee a bad name, thee wast never bad to me. Thee might give up thy poachin' till I wor dead and gone, anyhow."

"Anyhow I might be a bit o' help to thee now," answered Black Bob. "Thee'st allus been a good old gal to me, which nobody can't deny. I'll goo git thee more handles."

When he came back, with a big bundle of broomsticks embraced in his two arms, and, sitting down began to fit brooms on to them, his grandmother said—

"Light thy pipe, Bob. Thee'lt not be so ready to run off if thee'st havin' thy 'baccy. I'm agooin' to have a pull."

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So Bob's grandmother smoked and worked, and Black Bob smoked and worked, for an hour or two, and though they said scarcely anything more to each other, Bob's liking for his grandmother—thanks to Hoity Toity, who was hidden in the fragrant heather—began to do him more good than it had ever done before.

A scolding lecture from some one who thought poaching almost as bad as high treason, just then (if ever), Hoity Toity knew, would not have done Black Bob a morsel of good. Hoity Toity began to teach Black Bob through his grandmother, whose only objection to poaching was, that it did not pay in proportion to the risk, and who, in other respects, was a very little more respectable character than himself.

This was how Black Bob thought: "Folk says granny is a witch, but anyhow she's been a good old gal to me. Poachin' pays better than broom-dashin'; but she's right enough about its not payin' as it ought them as runs the risks. What with the brooms and the bit o' land, and farmer's work now and then (though havin' a master over me and

reg'lar hours is what I can't abide), I don't doubt granny and me might git a livin'. Anyhow, it's what she seems to ha' took into her head; and if I can't humour *her* a bit, there bain't no one else, as I knows, I've got to humour. Poor old gal, it couldn't be for long, and *she* don't mind hard work—theer's a sight o' sticks and broom-stuff she's cut since marnin', though she be bent a'mos' double."

This may not seem much, but Hoity Toity, lurking in the "broom-stuff," thought that he had made a very satisfactory beginning with Black Bob.

So Bob made up his mind not to go poaching again until his grandmother was dead. He helped her to make brooms, and saved her old legs by carrying the brooms round for sale; he got her plot of ground into better trim than it had been in for many a year, and at odd times he did bits of piece-work—mowing, reaping, thatching, hedging, ditching, draining, and so on—for the farmers.

His grandmother was very pleased, and Bob was pleased to see her pleased; but beyond that, he did not see that he had got much good out of his good conduct. In the evening, when his work

was done, he often felt rather mopish. Sly Hoity Toity knew that if Black Bob gave up poaching he would have to give up also the "Dog and Pheasant," a low beer-shop in Samplestead, frequented by people too disreputable to be admitted into the tap-room of the "Whcatsheaf." Bob went to the "Dog" two or three times after he had halted on his road to the dogs; but he was made so uncomfortable there, when its customers found that they could not coax or jeer him into poaching again, that he soon gave up going. The men who "used" the "Dog and Pheasant" stood in too much awe of Black Bob's pluck, and heavy, straight-hitting fist—they knew too well that he knew too much about them—to venture to bully him; but they sent him into Coventry, and Bob gave up going to the "Dog," and felt very lonely.

"I've got nobody to spake to now, 'cept poor old granny," he was muttering to himself one evening, as he walked along a deep shady lane. "I'm too good, they says, for them as uses the 'Dog,' and I bain't good enough for other folk."

The lane ran between two fields, in one of which

stood Farmer Tom Testy, and in the other a game-keeper, talking together across the high, overarching hedges. They could not see or hear Bob, and he could not see them, but Hoity Toity had managed to keep them talking there that Bob might hear them.

"It's all very fine, Muster Testy," the game-keeper was saying. "Black Bob's a deep card. He's taken to the industr'ous line becoss the country was gittin' too hot for un. You wait a bit, Muster Testy, till he's let the scent git cold, an' you'll see he'll be up to his old games agin—if he bain't up to 'em yit on the sly."

"It's my belief that you're too hard on the chap, Giles," Farmer Testy answered. "I don't say as Bob's turned saint, but a better hand than Bob, when he's in the mind for work, you won't find in this parish—no, nor in a dozen parishes round. He'll cut half-a-acre o' grass while another chap's sharpenin' his scythe. And as he *do* seem in the mind for work, it 'ud be hard, to my thinkin', to hunt him down and rob him of his chance o' turnin' honest. Your squire may talk, but he ain't *my*



master, and I mean to give Black Bob a job whenever I've got one for him, and I expect my brother Sam 'ud do the same if your squire weren't his landlord. Anyhow, you can't deny that Black Bob's a respectabler sort o' chap now, Giles, than some you ain't ashamed to drink with. Do you mean to say he ain't more of a man and a proper character than that Nicholas Notherpot, as won't do a stroke o' work so long as he's got twopence to soak hisself with at the 'Wheatsheaf?'"

To find that the Brothers Testy, who looked very sharply after their men, had a good opinion of his workmanship, quickened the beat of Black Bob's heart; but (so ingeniously does Hoity Toity adapt his lessons to the capacity of his pupils, bringing them gradually on from "Standard" to "Standard") Black Bob felt almost prouder at discovering that Farmer Testy thought him a "respectabler sort o' chap" already than one of the customers of the "Wheatsheaf," whose landlady would have looked as black as thunder at Black Bob if he had ventured to cross her threshold. He felt proud, even though he had only been preferred

to the most worthless customer of the "Wheat-sheaf."

"If I ever do goo inside the 'Wheatsheaf,'" muttered Black Bob, repeating in his rough way the lesson that Hoity Toity was dictating to him, "Muster Testy shall see that it shan't be to shirk my work and soak myself."

Black Bob, in spite of the gamekeeper's prediction, went on in "the industri'ous line," but Samplestead, considering his antecedents, still looked upon him as a black sheep. Even those who really more than half believed that he *had* turned over a new leaf, were very chary of expressing their opinion.

In a world in which Hoity Toity is everywhere present, it is strange, however true, that we should find so many people who cannot get rid of their belief that a man or woman, who has once been bad, must (whatever they may do) go on being bad; so many who, even if they don't think so, pretend to think so, either because they are afraid to risk their reputation for reading of character, or because they grudge giving up the pleasure of thinking themselves far better than their fellow-creatures.

Now Hoity Toity knew that a good many of the Samplestead people who despised Black Bob, would not have behaved a whit better than Black Bob, even if so well, if they had been brought up in the same way. Hoity Toity saw, too, that, although Black Bob had learnt that it was absurd for a man to expect to "get a good character" the very moment he turned over a new leaf, he had gone on for months patiently striving to do his duty, as far as he knew it; and so Hoity Toity resolved to give Black Bob a little of the encouragement of human sympathy, and the people who had looked down on him a little of the wholesome humiliation which despisers feel when they see the people they have despised behaving, beyond all question, far better than themselves.

Whit Monday had come, and the village club had marched into Samplestead church with brass band and blue gilt-lettered banners. Black Bob had for some time had a notion that he might "get a character" more quickly if he went to church; but until this Whit Monday he had been too shy to make an attempt to enter. "All sorts," how-

ever, he knew, went to church on Whit Monday—some of them with “characters” very little better than his own. Accordingly, on Whit Monday, he slunk up to the church; but the respectable folk who entered scowled at him so that he was put out of countenance, and was still hanging outside the porch, when the vicar’s little daughter ran up, just as the ringing-in bell gave its last toll. The little girl was late, and, besides, she was afraid of Black Bob. She was going to run by him, but Hoity Toity tripped her up with Stoppum. Black Bob ran to pick her up, and brushed the dust off her new frock so gently, that the little girl, looking up in astonishment, asked—

“Why don’t you come into church, my good man?”

“I bain’t good.”

“Nobody is really good. We have to go to church to try and get made as good as we can.”

“But I wor never inside a church afore, Miss.”

“Well, then, the more reason you ought to come now.”

"But I don't know wheer I've to goo to, Miss, nor what I've got to do."

"Oh, I'll show you a seat, and then you must stand up, and sit down, and kneel down just as the other people do, and listen to the prayers and the sermon."

And so, having spoken, the little girl took Black Bob by the hand, piloted him up the middle aisle, and planted him on a free seat just outside the vicarage pew. The regularly church-going old women who already occupied it, shrank, offended, from the contact of Black Bob's smock-frock; the congregation looked contemptuously amused, and nodded their heads to one another, to intimate that they had always said that the "parson's little gal was more nor half silly," and her eldest sister gave her a whispered lecture, with promise of more to follow, for having made a scene.

Black Bob stood up, sat down, and knelt down with painful conscientiousness to the best of his ability, but every now and then he was out of time, and blushed with bashful anger when he found that his fellow-worshippers were sniggering at his

awkwardness. The prayers, the psalms, and Mr Emberweek's sermon, were almost equal puzzles to him. He got from them a vague notion that nobody ought to think himself better than anybody, and that everybody ought to love everybody else; but he could not discover any practical application of the lesson in the way in which he was treated. When service was over (the vicar's little daughter having been prevented from again acting as his pilot), he stood, blushing with hotter bashful anger than ever, and staring, as Nicholas Notherpot elegantly phrased it, "like a stuck pig," until everybody else except the clerk was out of the church.

Now, then, what are you a-stayin' for?" the clerk said to him, trying to crow like a cock on his own dunghill, although mortally afraid of Black Bob: "There bain't nothin' as you can steal, and if there was there's plenty within call to stop ye. This bain't the place for such as you."

Big Black Bob, who was in a dazed condition, answered humbly to the little man—

"I'm a-goin'—thee needs not trouble thyself to shove me out."

"But I will, though," cried the clerk, with a coward's eagerness to snatch an unexpected chance of simulating courage. "Be off, you wagabone."

"Put down thy hand, thou old fool," retorted Black Bob, turning fiercely on the clerk.

He had no need to say it, however. The instant he turned the clerk bolted to the vestry, and there bolted himself in.

Black Bob walked out of church, thinking that he had not got much good by going thither, but still feeling proudly grateful to the pretty, gentle little girl who had not been afraid or ashamed to put her soft white mite of a hand into his rough big brown paw, and lead him to a seat in the sight of all the parish.

The club dinner-tent was pitched upon the village-green. As Black Bob crossed the green, smock-frocks were plodding across it with heavy eagerness to their annual gaudy-feast; the parsons and the rest of the "quality" stood chatting in a knot, ringed, at a respectful distance, by a circular crowd of gaping farmers, farmers' wives and children, tradespeople, and a few smock-frocks, who could

reason well enough to convince themselves that they might gratify themselves by hearing what the "quality" were saying without risking their rare good dinner, since the dinner could not begin until the "quality" who were to assist at it were inside the tent. As Black Bob approached this respectfully-ringed knot of talkers, a mad dog came slobbering and panting up a lane on the other side of the green.

"Poor dog," said Hoity Toity, "the sooner you are out of your misery the better—for you and everybody!"

That sounds kind ; but why, when the dog would otherwise have struck across the green without meeting anybody to bite, could it have been better for "everybody" for Hoity Toity to steer him with his staff stem on into the ringed knot of talkers? That, however, was what Hoity Toity did.

As Black Bob was passing the ringed knot of talkers, the mad dog rushed into it, and talkers and listeners scattered in wild dismay. A little girl stumbled as she ran, right in the dog's path. There was time to save her, if anybody had the courage



to rush to the rescue ; but nobody had the courage except Black Bob, who drove his big brown fist against the foaming muzzle of the mad dog just as it was about to snap-to in the white neck of the vicar's little daughter ; and then, leaping on the overthrown poor mad beast, gave it a happy release from life by grinding its distraught brain out with his iron-shod boots. Compliments were heaped on Black Bob when the scattered company came back ; but Black Bob liked far better than any verbal praise the clutch which the vicar's little daughter kept on the fortunately unscratched, rough fist which had saved her from a horrid death.

“My man,” said the old vicar, when the little girl had let go her hold of Black Bob, and run up to her father, “you have done what I ought to have done. I am ashamed to think what bad thoughts I have had of you. Even if you had been as bad as I thought you, I should have been to blame, as your clergyman, for doing so little to prevent your becoming bad. But we all have wronged you, I believe, Black Bob.”

Black Bob grinned.

"You shan't be called *Black* Bob any longer, if I can help it," the vicar went on, smiling back. "I can only say now that I thank you from the bottom of my heart for saving my dear little girl. I will say more to you presently—I have to go into the tent now to say grace. Lettie, take your brave friend home, and give him dinner at the vicarage."

"No, thank you, sir, and you, Miss, thanking you kindly ; I'll goo home to granny, please, and tell her as the parson says that I bain't to be called Black Bob no more. That'll please poor old granny."

The second time Bob went to Samplestead church he met with far more consideration than he had met with the first time he was inside it. If it had not been for Hoity Toity, the vicar and Lettie between them might have spoilt him with kindness ; but, to ballast him with stones in the other pocket, Hoity Toity did *not* use Stoppum to prevent the spitefully half-true things which some of the respectable folk of Samplestead went on saying of Bob, after he had ceased to be Black Bob, from coming

to Bob's ears. They did not trouble him much, when he found that they had no effect on Hester, the vicar's pretty housemaid, who owned to having fallen in love with Bob as soon as he had become a vicarage-marked respectable character.

The vicar married them. Little Lettie was bridesmaid, and whilom Black Bob was appointed bailiff for the parish glebe-land. His grandmother still lived on in her squatter's hovel, but Bob and Hester between them made it a snug little place. The potato-plot was well looked after; and although granny insisted on still making heath-brooms, her broom-making, in everybody's opinion except her own, was merely an amusement.

Just before granny died, Hoity Toity sent Bob to her bedside. He was tossing up and down the new-born little Bob, who for a time had made him almost forget poor old granny, saying, "I'll make a man o' thee, Bob; I'll make a rare man o' thee," when Hoity Toity so tripped big Bob up with Stoppum, that if it had not been for Easum, little Bob's chance of living to be a man of any kind would have been lost. When Bob had restored

the fallen baby to his frightened mother, and had quieted her fears, the thought occurred to him—that is, he so translated what Hoity Toity said to him—

“What chance wouldst thee ha’ had o’ bein’ a man o’ any kind, if it hadn’t been for granny?”

A few minutes afterwards he started for her cottage.

“I’m glad thee’st come, my Bob,” said the old woman, as he entered. “Marnin’ would ha’ been too late. I’m agooin’, Bob, and then thee’lt be free to goo poächin’ agin if thee wilt. Thee’st allus been a good lad to me, and thee’st kep’ thy word. But thee won’t goo, wilt thee, lad?” the old woman added in a wheedling tone.

If she had not been dying, Bob could not have helped laughing in her face.

“I’ve got a wife now, granny,” he said.

“I know thee hast, and she bain’t such a bad lass; but what o’ that?”

“She’s give me a fine boy.”

“Has she, then? See *he* don’t goo a-poächin’, and that’ll keep thee from it, Bob. I’m right glad

thee 'st got a man-child. Bring un up better than I brought thee—though I meant well by thee, Bob. Kiss me, Bob—quick, lad ; for I'm a-goin' now."

## CHAPTER VII.

### *THE VILLAGE FOOL.*

**Y**OUNG Bill Pearson, as I have said, was not very wise ; but his poor brother Peter was much sillier, that he went by the name of the Village Fool.

The cottage in which poor Peter was born would make a pretty picture, because it stood close up to bank on which almost horizontal willows grew, reaching over the cottage to dip their long green boughs into a little stream, and the thatch of the cottage was quite a garden of blue and pink, and white and yellow wild-flowers. But it was a most unhealthy cottage to live in—so ruinous and damp and poisoned by the bad smells which came from the little winding stream, that looked so pretty sparkling in the sun. And then, as if all that had not been

enough, the hovel was not half, not half a quarter, big enough for the only half-fed people who lived in it. In one little bedroom slept old Mrs Pearson, who was bedridden, and Pearson and his wife, and seven of their children, grown-up and young. No wonder none of the young Pearsons were very wise, and that poor Peter, the youngest, was an idiot.

Hoity Toity did not interfere to prevent him from becoming one ; but as poor Peter was not to blame for the bad food, bad clothing, bad housing, and bad habits, which, continued generation after generation, had ended in turning what ought to have been a healthy, bright boy into a sickly idiot. Hoity Toity tried to make poor Peter's life happier than you might fancy it could be.

As soon as it was found out that he was silly—downright silly—his grandmother hated him, although she had made a great pet of Bill, who, after all, was not so very much wiser than Peter. But Bill could get his own living after a fashion, and that Peter would never be able to do ; so old Mrs Pearson (who had been a hard-working vixen until old age kept her to her bed, in which she con-

tinued to be a vixen with a temper by no means improved, through her being unable any longer to work) hated poor little Peter, and scolded her meek-spirited daughter-in-law, as if it was all her fault that the baby had not been born bright. Pearson, who inherited his mother's temper, growled that it was a pity that brats couldn't be drowned like kittens when he found that he had got a child who would be a "useless mouth" all his life. Peter's sisters grumbled at having to nurse him, because he was lumpish and cross, and had no funny taking-notice and attracting-notice ways. Peter's brothers, as he grew up, sometimes teased him, and at other times they neglected him. He was nothing to be proud of, and he had not wit enough even to enable them to turn him into a useful drudge.

But Hoity Toity is a magical-spectacle-maker, and as soon as Peter was born, he clapped a pair of his magical spectacles, which cannot be seen, although most wonderful things can be seen through them, across Peter's mother's nose, and she instantly thought that Peter was the finest child that she had



ever had. And though as years went by she could not help owning that it was a pity that Peter would never be able to earn his living, the magical spectacles still made her somehow proud of his deficiency, as if it were only cleverness *too* clever for common use. They made her still think, too, that though his look might be peculiar, none other of her children was in a certain, or rather uncertain, way half so good-looking. She found time—a hard thing for an English farm-labourer's wife to do—to kiss and cuddle her idiot baby.

It was necessary that Peter should be born, as another proof of what bad food, bad clothing, bad housing, and bad habits must end in. But Mrs Pearson, junior, could not be blamed for bad habits, and poor little Peter, of course, as I have said before, could not be blamed for the hard lives and bad habits of his long line of ancestors (incredible though it may sound, labourers' sons have as long lines of ancestors as lords' sons); and so Hoity Toity gave a pair of his magical spectacles to Mrs Pearson, that she might get some mysterious comfort out of her idiot boy, and that he, who had

missed so much else, might not miss, might rather get a Benjamin's share of, fondling mother's love.

As Peter grew up, Hoity Toity, who knew that Mrs Pearson had very little time to spare, took him in charge himself. He beckoned Peter out of the unhealthy cottage, and led him long rambles through the fields and woods.

Hoity Toity borrowed the twigs', and the briars', and the grass-blades' long fingers to beckon with. Sometimes when Peter was looking another way, Hoity Toity would send a yellow-banded brown bumble-bee, or a black-dotted white butterfly, or a gleaming May-bug, or a sealingwaxy ladybird in to call him out, or a note, in the shape of a bit of thistledown or dandelion-down, and off Peter would start with his unseen, unknown guide.

Sometimes Peter grew lazy as soon as he got outside the cottage, and would lie down on the bank of the unwholesome little stream that flowed past it. Then invisible Hoity Toity would run along the water, kicking it up into ripples that challenged Peter to run races with them, but nasty

smells, too, that soon made Peter run away from them.

Hoity Toity had a nicer stream than that to take Peter to—a clear, pebbly little stream, dotted with green stones, on which stood white-breasted water-ousels, bobbing their heads, and cocking up their short tails like white-waistcoated old gentlemen making after-dinner speeches.

Poor Peter used to mimic the up-and-downing ousels, and to be so happy whilst he was doing it, that then, at any rate, nobody need call him “poor.” Peter, too, would chuckle with delight—half-choked like a gurgling bottle—and clap his hands, dapping up and down like an india-rubber ball, when he saw the green and gold and scarlet sticklebacks darting out to fight any fish that dared to swim close by their nests.

In the fields poor Peter ran after butterflies, and saucy little red field mice, and smeared his face with the cuckoo-spit he got off the honeysuckle leaves, and munched sorrel, and put buttercups into his waistcoat button-holes to look like gold buttons; and in the woods he picked oak-

apples, and when he found they were not good to eat, he played at marbles with them, and crowed proudly as he beat himself game after game.

Sometimes, when Hoity Toity had taken him to a house in which there was any one kind enough to give poor Peter something to eat—he did not much mind what it was, so long as there was plenty of it, although sweet things were what he preferred (Hoity Toity, to please him, had taught him to suck honeysuckle and white-nettle blossoms)—Peter would ramble all day long in the woods and fields, “as happy as a king”—a good deal happier than some kings.

At night, when the noiseless bats had begun to flit about, and the booming beetles were blundering about sideways like black barges, Hoity Toity used to take Peter home, and if he did not get a welcome and good night from anybody else, his tired mother was always ready—even when he had become a full-grown man—to hug him, and had generally managed to keep something for his supper. Sometimes poor Peter was very grateful for

his cold beans, warmed-up potatoes, and so on; but at other times he would be pettish, and push away his mother (when she put her arms round his neck, and stooped to kiss him) in so rough a way that, if her magical spectacles had not been of Hoity Toity's own best make, they would have tumbled off her nose.

One morning some Lancers halted for an hour or two in Samplestead. You may be sure that poor Peter stared at them with eyes and mouth both wide open—though, for the matter of that, so did almost everybody in the village. As they were going away, one of them asked some one to hand him up his lance, which was leaning against the porch of the Wheatsheaf. A rush was made towards it, and a sturdy lad got hold of it. Poor Peter, when he saw the little flag at the end of the long spear fluttering, looked very disappointed that *he* had not got it, and Hoity Toity, who attends, you know, to things that we think trifles, knowing what a great thing the handing up of the lance would be to Peter, put it into the head of the other boy to let Peter hand it up.



POOR PETER PLAYING AT SOLDIERS.



"Thank 'ee, lad," said the soldier, as he slipped his arm through the strap, and fixed the end in his stirrup-socket, "you'll be a man, after all, before your mother."

That stale old joke was no joke to Peter, but a grand compliment. When he came back into the village, after following the Lancers until they began to trot, he went straight to his mother and told her, quite boastfully, that he would be a man before she would—the fine soger gentleman had said so.

After that, Peter was almost always playing at soldiers. He pranced about on a brown broomstick, which (since Hoity Toity had given him, too, a pair of magical spectacles) was a brown charger to poor Peter. The village carpenter nailed a short bit of lath across a long one for his sword, and Peter was as proud of it as if it had been a Damascus blade. He carried it, and sloped it, and saluted with it, and slashed down whole battalions of nettles with it, in the most heroic style. His mother and Zephaniah Shears gave him little bits of greasy ribbon, and scraps of coloured rag; and



these, and the cocks' and crows' feathers he picked up, he stuck into his hat, and fancied himself quite as fine as his friend the soldier gentleman.

Sometimes the village children would humour Peter as he came prancing along—would make bows and curtsies to him, or run away as if he had terribly frightened them. But at other times, when they were in a bad temper, they threw stones and dirt at him, and some of the Samplestead young men, when Peter had grown up to be a man, so far as size went, were cruel enough sometimes to fling him down and beat him, and then to jeer at him because he cried. "Soger Peter's blubberin'," they would shout, and then poor Peter would begin to cry more than ever through shame and rage, and rush hither and thither like a hunted dog, as he tried to break through the ring of tormentors that hedged him in.

One afternoon Peter was being teased in this way. He had broken out of the ring, but a pack of teasers, big and little, was at his heels in full cry. Poor Peter looked this side and that side as he ran, as a doubling hare looks for a hole in a

hedge to slip through when the greyhounds are galloping after her. Presently, he heard a little voice calling—

“Dis thay, dis thay, Petie,” and saw a blue-eyed, curly-haired little girl standing at an open cottage-door, and beckoning to him.

“Tum in,” she said, when he ran up, “tum in, Petie, an’ me ta’ care o’ vou. Then de naughty thicked boys tum, me dook out o’ de thindow an’ fighten ’em athay.”

So Peter went in, and when his tormentors came up, the brave little champion whom Hoity Toity had given him did look out of the window, and though she did not exactly frighten them away, she did drive them away. They grew ashamed of themselves when that lisping little mite scolded them, and slunk off one by one.

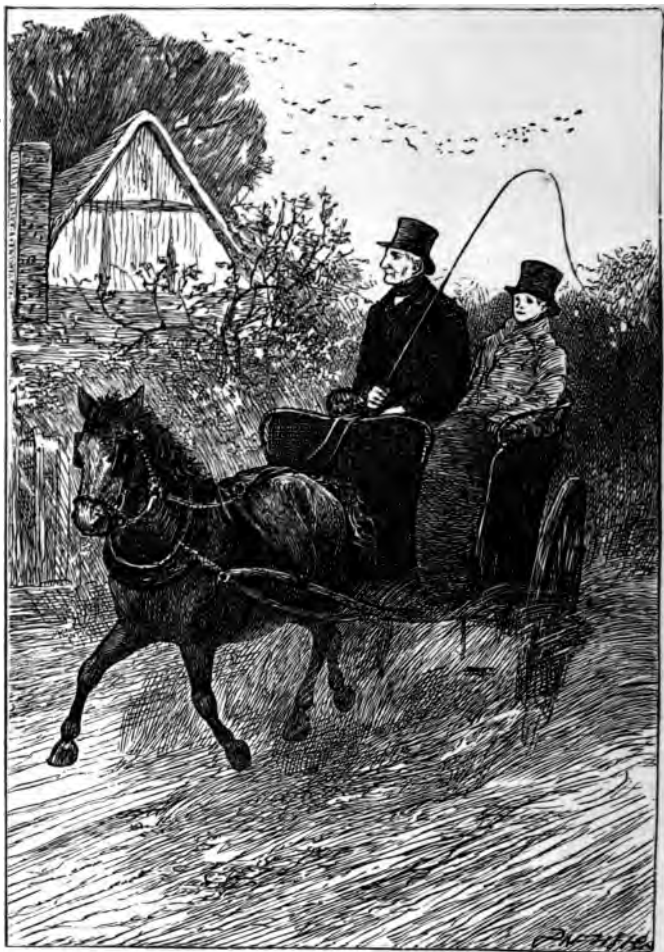
After that Hoity Toity used to take the little girl with Peter into the woods, and there they would stay together for hours. The little girl was not in the least afraid of Peter. On the other hand, she thought that she was taking care of Peter; and so, indeed, she was. If any one likely

to tease him came near when they were out together, Peter would take hold of the little girl's hand, and the little girl would say proudly—

“Don't be f'ightened, Petie. Me told him if he 'th thicked.”

But the winter after, Peter's mother died, and then Hoity Toity thought that it would be well that Peter should die too. When the cowslips came again, the little girl had not poor Peter to gather them for her. Instead, she used to go and gather the daisies that grew in the churchyard, and she would sit by Peter's grave, patting it, and telling Peter not to be f'ightened,

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been named in the proceedings.



DR. PILLS DRIVING HIS ROUNDS.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *THE VILLAGE DOCTOR.*

ONE of the hardest workers in Samplestead was Mr Pills—*Dr* Pills he was always called—the village doctor and the Union doctor as well. He was a little man, with a very large family, and a very small horse. His practice amongst patients who couldn't pay him, or could only pay him very little, was overwhelming; but the few people in and about Samplestead who could have paid him handsomely had a knack of very seldom falling ill, and when they did fall ill, although they might send for Mr Pills as a make-shift, he had soon to give place to their own doctors from the market-town—they were too proud to be doctored by a man who doctored paupers.

Dr Pills's little horse was looked after by a funny

little boy groom, who rode out with his master in his shabby little gig. Dr Pills's little groom wore a tall old chimney-pot hat and a second-hand and very seedy metal-buttoned man's great-coat, which, at any rate, covered his legs nicely in winter-time, since it was about half a foot too long for him. That was the whole of the little groom's livery, but he was very proud of it, and folded his arms and squared his elbows like a grown-up groom as he sat beside his master. The squire's livery servants and the town-doctors' smart grooms, however, used to make great fun of Dr Pills's threadbare groomkin.

But Hoity Toity was not ashamed to ride out with him. Hoity Toity almost always made a third in the gig when Dr Pills drove his rounds, and sat behind or in front of the doctor when he rode his rounds, and the small horse did not feel his weight at all, but went all the faster for having to drag three instead of two, and to carry double. And Hoity Toity went with Dr Pills when he went on foot to his patients.

The doctor did not approve of walking-sticks—

he was a plain, springy little man, and said that gouty old men and puppies were the only people who should carry them. For all that, however, he was often indebted to Hoity Toity's walking-stick. When his strength began to flag in his long walks, sly Hoity Toity used to push him on from behind with Easum. In all kinds of weather Hoity Toity was out with Dr Pills, but I will give you an account of one of the cases they visited together in summer.

The little horse was pulled up at Dame Damsion's gate. Out of the little gig leaped the little groom and rushed to the little horse's head, just as if it were a most frisky animal, sure to bolt if not most vigilantly watched. The little groom pushed his foot against the little horse's fore hoofs, to make him stand out well, as he had seen the big groom of the most swellish doctor in the market-town do to the swell doctor's big brougham-horse. This doctor was so great a swell that he had a supply of waistcoats which enabled him to put a fresh one on every day for a quarter of a year—the variety, he said, was both soothing and stimu-



lating to his patients—he came into a room as noiselessly as a cat, and talked in a silky purr—but I doubt whether he really was half so good a doctor as white-seamed, rough-and-ready Dr Pills, who only spoke in a whisper when it was necessary for him so to speak, and who thought himself lucky to get shillings for many an hour's hard work, whilst the swell doctor pocketed guineas for two or three minutes' chat—pocketed them with an air which *seemed* to say—

“My good sir, or madam, why are you indelicate enough to bore me with the coin of the realm? I suppose I must take it, since you proffer it—otherwise I should wound your feelings. But if I were really to demand *payment* for my services, you would have to pass through the Bankruptcy Court. Just think of the money that has been spent on my education—of my skill, my reputation, my fascinating manners—of my condescension in bringing all these advantages to bear on the case of so insignificant a person as yourself.”

Meantime Dr Pills and Hoity Toity were hunting up Dame Damson. They found her in her

tiny dairy, laying some apricots, which she had picked half-ripe, to ripen on its little shelves. It was the summer after the spring in which Dame Damson had spent all her little savings in buying off her Tom from the necessity of going to "them horrid furrin parts abroad." Her two or three apricot trees had been so well canvas-screened, sulphur-dusted, and tanned-netted, that, now that rich sunlight had come again, after a dreary time of rain and wind and muggy blight, there was a chance of her getting a half-crop of the "sunny fruit." To make sure even of that, however, she had been gathering the half-ripe apricots. Who could tell how long the sun would shine, and the rain hold off?

Almost all her other fruit was incurably damaged. Dame Damson looked very doleful as she turned over her immature apricots, and arranged them so that they could not touch one another on her dairy shelves. She had managed to pay her midsummer rent, but now she was almost penniless. Her credit was still good at the village shop, but Dame Damson was an old-fashionedly honest old woman,

who could only enjoy credit when she thought that she had a fair chance of paying speedily for the goods with which she was trusted. How was she to pay for them with a small half-crop of apricots, her cow sold, and her grandson "down" with ague?

Almost as soon as Tom Damson got back to Samplestead he had got work as a mower. A splendid haysel, brief and abundant, was expected then ; but, after a blink of glorious weather, heavy rain set in, drenching and tumbling the grass as if a flood had rushed over it. Whilst the golden weather lasted, however, poor Tom had been laid aside. After the foolish fashion of mowers, he had cut himself a heap of grass, dank with dew, to lounge upon, and, being enfeebled by a long course of short commons and low spirits, he had knocked under as soon as ague, rising out of that pretty, poisonous little stream of which I have spoken, and beside which Tom was mowing, had stretched out its first frosty, and afterwards fiery fingers, to clutch him.

Dame Damson was in great distress when Tom,

leaving his scythe to rust in next night's dew, crawled back to her cottage. He could scarcely lift his feet, but kept on languidly stretching out his arms, making "a old windmill of hisself," as his grandmother tartly remarked before she had found out how very ill he was. He gaped like a hungry young starling, but turned sick when Dame Damson offered him any food. She had not much to offer, and felt very angry at first when her little was rejected as loathsome.

"It's a pity I didn't let you goo abroad, Tom, instid o' beggarin' myself to buy ye off," she said. "You must ha' lived like a fightin' cock up in Lunnon, or you wouldn't tarn up your nose at good wholesome wittles."

But ague was common in Samplèstead, and Dame Damson soon recognised its symptoms in poor Tom, and kissed him and cried over him to make amends for having even seemed to scold him.

Tom's brown face and hands grew ghastly pale, in spite of their brownness; his lips and nails turned blue; his nose shrivelled up as if shrinking

from an icy pinch ; his arms and legs, when his grandmother chafed them, were so "goose-skinned" that they rasped even her hard hand like a nutmeg-grater. Then he grew as stiff as if he had been petrified ; and then he twitched all over, in head and back, loins and limbs ; and then he was sick, gasped for breath, and when he had got it, talked as if he didn't know where he was. Dame Damson clutched her grandson's wrist, as if the mere feeling of his pulse must do him good—didn't Dr Pills always feel the pulse of any one who was ailing ? Poor Tom's beat in such feebly-rapid little spurts that Dame Damson grew more anxious than ever. Was her son's son—the only one left belonging to her—going to die on that sunny evening—die without warning, and after she had spent all her little savings to save him from dying in "them horrid furrin parts abroad ?"

But whilst the Dame held her grandson's wrist, his pulse suddenly altered into a regular hard trot, his pale face turned as red as a poppy, his skin grew as dry as a dusty turnpike road, he clutched at the water-jug, put his hands up to his throbbing

head, tossed and tumbled on the bed upon which he had thrown himself, and began to whisper and howl like a madman. After a time the fit passed off, leaving poor perspiring Tom as wet as the grass on which he had been foolish enough to lie ; but two days afterwards the fit came on again, and Dame Damson was in great distress. She stripped her empty cow-house of black spider's web, and dosed Tom with it ; but it was no good. Every other day the fit came on again. Dr Pills must be sent for ; but how was he to be paid ? Hitherto Dame Damson had always paid her doctor, and it was a mortification to her to have to accept advice gratis, even for her grandson. She was in a very ruffled mood when Hoity Toity and Dr Pills found her in her little dairy.

"So you've come at last, doctor," she said, snapishly.

"My good creature," the doctor answered with a laugh, "what would you have ? I wasn't at home when you called last night. I was away at Little Ashford, helping another little Carter into the world. All night he kept me waiting ; and poor

Carter didn't look best pleased when he showed his little red face at last—there were ten before, you know, and I suppose Carter doesn't get more than ten shillings a week."

"Well, that's a deal better than not gittin' nothing like me. I could ha' paid you once, doctor, and I have paid you, but, of course, I can't expec' ye to hurry to me now from them as you makes money by."

Dr Pills began to lose his temper. He had lost the greater part of his night's rest in attending Mrs Carter, for which he would not get a penny; he had not known of Tom Damson's illness until he got back to his home in the morning; and then, as soon as he had had forty winks, and a wash, and his breakfast, he had taken Dame Damson's cottage first in his round of visits; and yet she was talking in that unreasonable manner.

"I didn't know that you couldn't pay me, dame," he said; "but you ought to know that that will make no difference with me."

"Oh yes, but it will, though," snapped the poor,

ruffled old woman. "If I was rich, I could have grand doctors waitin' on me in their carriages willin', and shouldn't have to come beggin' to you. If it had been me instid o' my poor Tom, I wouldn't ha' humbled myself. After all, though, doctor, you needn't think as you're a-doin' me a favour, for pay you, you may be sure, Tom or me'll manage to somehow."

That reference to grand doctors in their carriages almost exhausted Dr Pills' patience. He was going to say, "Well, you had better send for one of your grand doctors, and see whether they will come to you for nothing," when something stopped his lips. A thick spray of the honeysuckle that grew outside the open dairy window waved in against his face. Just before there had not been a breath of wind stirring, and therefore Dr Pills was puzzled. The fact was that Hoity Toity had hooked in the honeysuckle with Stop-pum. He kept it against the doctor's lips until he had recovered his temper.

"Come, come," said Dr Pills, when the honeysuckle waved back, "old friends like you and me,



dame, mustn't quarrel. Are those greengages you 've gathered?"

"Law, sir," exclaimed Dame Damson, mollified by her chance of showing superior knowledge, "don't you know an apricock when you see it?—and you a doctor! They're half-ripe apricocks."

"And what have you gathered them for?" asked the doctor.

"To make sure of them," answered the old woman. "P'raps they might ha' ripened sooner if I'd left 'em on the tree; but then, you see, they might ha' dropped off, or the wopses might ha' got 'em."

When he heard that, the doctor wanted to make a parable out of the apricots to cheer the old woman. But he was not very quick at that kind of thing, and would not have been able to manage it at all if Hoity Toity had not helped him. Dr Pills was quite astonished at his own cleverness when he said—

"There, dame, don't you see? You and your Tom are like the apricots. You're in the shade

just now ; but you 'll find it's all for the best, if you're only patient. And now where have you hidden Tom ?”

“ I made a bed for 'un in the loft, doctor, to keep 'un as far from the ground as I could.”

The doctor stumbled up the ladder into the loft, which Dame Damson had made as comfortable as she could. He did not laugh at her for giving her grandson cobwebs.

“ Ah, yes,” he said, “ I've heard that that does good sometimes ; but since it doesn't seem to have done Tom good, I'll send you some bark. Dose him well with it, dame—a couple of drachms every two hours. If he turns obstinate, send for me. Perhaps he would be too many for me if he were well ; but I think I could manage him now, though he is such a long fellow.”

For the first time since Tom had been taken ill, he and his grandmother gave a little smile. The dim loft brightened up as if a sunbeam had shot into it. Unseen Hoity Toity was the sunbeam.

“ Well, and now about this great lazy fellow's

food, dame," the doctor went on. "He ought to have sago or arrowroot; and butcher's meat and a glass or two of good port when the fit is off. I could get them for you from the House; but you are such a plaguey independent old lady, I suppose that would offend you."

"Neither me nor any one as belonged to me was ever on the parish yet," moaned the old woman. "They'd trust me for the saguey at the shop; but I were never much of a customer at the butcher's at the best o' times, and so it ain't likely he'd serve me now without ready money; and as for the port wine, I don't see any ways o' gittin' that, 'cept from the parish; though it ain't likely to do poor Tom much good if he gits it that way; he'd almost as lief drink witriol."

"Well, well," said the doctor, "you go and get the sago, and I'll try to manage about the beef and wine. I'm obliged to be a better customer of Cleaver's than you are, with all my youngsters, but I'm not quite sure that my credit is any better with him than yours. However, I'll see what I can do."

The first person Dr Pills met when he got outside Dame Damson's gate was the vicar.

"Anything the matter in there, doctor?" asked the clergyman.

"Poor young Tom is down with the ague," answered the doctor, "and the old woman seems to be in trouble."

"I'll go in and have a talk with them," said the vicar.

"If you were to send them half-a-dozen of your old port, it would do Tom a deal more good than talk," blurted out the rough-and-ready little doctor.

The vicar at first was inclined to be offended, but Hoity Toity wouldn't let him be.

"Perhaps you are right, doctor," he said, with a laugh; "at any rate, I will give them the wine *as well as* the talk."

And he went back to the vicarage to order the wine to be sent to Dame Damson's.

Meantime Dr Pills and his little groom were jogging on behind the little horse to the village butcher's. Hoity Toity went before them. He

knew that the little doctor had only been able to pay half of his last half-year's butcher's bill, and that Cleaver consequently might need a little management.

"Here comes Pills," said Cleaver to his wife. "He can goo ridin' about with his groom as if he was a gen'leman, and owin' me nigh upon ten pound all the time. It 'ud jist pay for them five ship I got o' Farmer Stubbs yisterday. If he's come a-orderin' o' more meat, I shall let him know it 'ud be conwenient if he'd pay for what he's had."

"For shame, Cleaver; don't you insult the doctor," said the butcher's fat wife. "You know he'll pay you, soon's ever he can; and a kinder, hardworkinger man than Dr Pills you'll not find anywheres within a hundred miles of Samplestead. Jist think how kind he were to our little Fanny when you wasn't so well to do as you are now, Cleaver. He didn't come a-botherin' *you* about his bill."

"That's true, old gal, though you said it," the butcher remarked, beating a retreat under cover of

a joke. "You needn't be afeared—I won't say a word to him about the money."

"Well, doctor," cried the butcher, when the gig stopped in front of his shop, "what can I do for you to-day? Beef, grass-lamb, mutton, veal, I've got. You pays yer money—leastways I mean I book it to you, doctor—and you takes yer ch'ice."

"Didn't you say, Cleaver, as you wasn't a-goin' to say a word about the money?" exclaimed his wife. "Don't you mind him, Dr Pills. He don't mean nothing, but he's a thick-head."

If Hoity Toity had not been there, unpleasant language might have followed; but Hoity Toity was there, and the doctor and Mr and Mrs Cleaver all burst out laughing. The little groom tried to look as grimly grave—as indifferent to everything except horses—as he had seen the town grooms look; but he was young and country-bred, and couldn't manage it. His lips twitched, and he laughed, too, when Mrs Cleaver called her husband a thick-head; and instead of getting angry, Cleaver grinned and answered, "Well, that's true, old gal, though you said it." (The village butcher found it

hard to make a joke, and so when he *had* made one he made the most of it.)

"I haven't called to order anything for myself, Cleaver," said the doctor; "but young Tom Damson ought to have a mutton chop every day, and his independent old grandmother won't let me order it from the House, and fancies you won't trust her. Send round a chop every day till Tom gets well, Cleaver. If the old woman can't pay you, I'll make it all right with the Guardians."

"Suttinly I will, sir, and not charge her nor the Guardians nayther," replied Cleaver, into whose pocket, clinking with small change, Hoity Toity had crept. "I ain't so bad off but I can afford to do a bit of a kindness to an old resider as I've known ever since I was a boy, and not a respectabler old ooman in all Samplestead, and the young chap's a well-meanin' young feller, too. What on earth could the old ooman be a-thinkin' of about my not trustin' on her? I'll goo round with the chop myself, and give her a good scoldin', too, for thinkin' evil of her neighbours."

Hoity Toity went back to Dame Damson with

the butcher, and made his scolding, administered in the loft, so good-tempered that surprise (as is often the case with ague patients) cured Tom in a minute.

When Dr Pills next called on his patient he had only to prescribe sulphate of quinine, and no more lying down on damp grass in bad air with an empty stomach. Tom was quite fit for work by harvest time, and got so much of it that Dame Damson was ready with her Michaelmas rent on Michaelmas day.

All through the winter Tom kept her, and when spring came the cow was brought back. Fruit was not very plentiful that next year either, but by way of thank-offering to Dr Pills and Cleaver, who wouldn't be paid for their medicine and food, the dame's two best baskets of apricots, with Hoity Toity's smile burnishing their gold, were carried round to the doctor and the butcher.



## CHAPTER IX.

### *IN MUCKMAMMON'S RENTS.*

**D**OWN in the country the sky was blue, flecked with white clouds that looked like flocks of Fairy-land fresh-washed sheep. The sunlight was rich again, and beneath its warm smile, green leaf and blade were dancing in triumph over the dark prisons from which they had escaped. Flowers were opening like the shy eyes of wakening babes: and flowers were open in a broad blaze—an ecstatic stare of astonishment at the beauty of the world in which they found themselves. White butterflies were flitting over the flowers, fluttering hither and thither as if intoxicated with their fragrance. Rustling boughs, booming and buzzing bees, chirping crickets, humming flies, chirruping and carolling birds, breezes whispering secrets to the fresh

grass and young corn that bent to listen, brooks gurgling round moist mossy stones, the bleating of lambs, the lowing of oxen, the whinnying of foals, children's voices, the tinkling of 'sheep-bells and horse-bells, all sounds heard anywhere, harmonised into an exhilarating or a deliciously dreamy music. Even worn-out old farmer's-men got a few minutes' respite from rheumatism, as they felt the sun strike through their faded, patched smock-frocks. Even poor drudges of farmer's-men's wives remembered the time when they were merry little girls—a momentary gleam came into their lack-lustre eyes as they watched their little ones tumbling or making daisy-chains and cowslip-balls upon the sunny green.

“Let me see how my poor Londoners are faring,” said Hoity Toity.

And in an instant he was at the mouth of Muckmammon's Rents.

The sun was shining there, too—after a fashion. A hot, brassy smoke-fog, that tasted of brimstone, hung over the grimy Rents, jammed into a cleft that Muckmammon had found unoccupied in a black

region, in which squat rows of houses stood back to back and nose to nose. Two persons could not get into Muckmammon's Rents at the same time ; even a single person, if stout, had to sidle through the narrow slit between two houses that was the entrance to the double row of hovels—fifteen on a side—out of whose tenants, although the sties were not fit for pigs, Muckmammon screwed a comfortable income.

The space between the hovels was rather wider than the slit, but when the inhabitants of the Rents sat on their door-steps, if they had stretched out their legs, instead of nursing their knees, their toes would have met in the ink-black gutter which had "made itself" in the middle of the court unpaved. This narrow little slip of sloppy ground was the general yard, rubbish-hole, lounging-place, playground, and drying-ground of the Rents—the Rents houses had no back-doors.

Many-knotted lines were stretched from house to house, with damp, dripping clothes hung upon them, which it seemed strange that anybody should have taken the trouble to pretend to wash. What

colour they could have been when they went into the washtub, if *that* was their colour when they came out of the washtub, it was hard to guess. And even if they had been washed as white as driven snow, they would soon have got as black as ever when hung out to dry in that smoky court, with greasy heads, shoulders, and hands constantly flinging them up or thrusting them aside.

On the ash-heaps that rose beside the inky gutter, like the ballast-hills on the banks of the black Tyne, grubby-like children were digging for cabbage-stalks, oyster-shells, herring-heads, and bottle-necks ; at the bottom of the court, lads were gambling for halfpence ; dusty, bristly men were lounging about with their hands in their pockets—some smoking, others looking enviously at the smokers ; yellow-skinned, unwashed women sat on their doorsteps or lounged against their doorposts, gossiping and wrangling. Two of them were fighting like wild-cats—scratching each other's faces and necks with their claw-like, crooked fingers, and worrying each other's back-hair with their clenched teeth.

Though the houses had only four rooms each, some of them held more than four families. Through the open doors and windows, and between the heads and over the shoulders of the listless or loud-talking idlers, men, women, and children could be seen hard at work in the crowded rooms—crowded although most scantily furnished. These workers worked on in a dull, dogged way at their stitching, hammering, pegging, pasting, glueing, and what not. They seemed to have no pleasure in their work, but from the time they got up to the time they lay down to sleep again—weak children and women working many an hour longer than the working-day strong working-men make such a fuss about—these feeble workers stuck to their dreary toil, because they knew that to stop meant to starve. They scarcely allowed themselves time to snatch the meagre meals their low-paid labour earned.

Hoity Toity stopped before a house in which, in a room on the ground floor, a woman was stitching as monotonously as a clock ticks, but a great deal faster: a woman as careworn as those poor women down in the bright country, and without any cheer-

ful country sights and sounds to bring now and then a flush to her cheek, and a sparkle to her eye. She could not even spare time to give a kiss or a toss, a smile, a chirrup, or a tickle, to her year-old baby-boy, who pulled at her dress as he rolled or crawled upon the floor.

In a corner of the room a man lay moaning.

This was the lodger, an old bone-grubber. His landlord was a dock labourer. His landlady was the careworn woman who was stitching away at navvies' coarse clothing for Messrs Skinflint and Skinfllea, the slop tailors.

The rag and bone gatherer looked as if he would have been pounced upon as a bundle of rags and bones himself, if any brother or sister grubber had found him lying in the streets instead of in a corner of the dock labourer's room. He was an old, old man—his head and back were curved like the blade of a sickle—but he had to get up before daylight, and totter about trying, for many a mile, to earn—what do you think? He never made a shilling by his day's work; he was in tolerably good spirits if he made sixpence. Sometimes he made

twopence or a penny only ; sometimes he made nothing.

He was lying in his corner, too tired to go out to work, on his flabby flock-mattress, covered with an old sack. For two or three days he had not been able to go out bone-grubbing—he had not been able to pay for his last week's lodging ; but the dock labourer's wife had taken compassion on him, and given him a bit of dry bread now and then (Hoity Toity had been in Muckmammon's Rents before).

Now, however, as she sat stitching at her rough work with thread and needle-scored fingers, and thought how hard she and her husband had to work to keep themselves and their children from starving—how, indeed, their children had to help them in their bread-winning, she grudged the old man what seemed to her, for the time, his lazy rest in the corner of her room. He had not paid for it, she thought to herself, and she knew that when the rent collector came next, she and her husband would be sorely puzzled how to satisfy him. It was less than a shilling a-week that the old bone-

grubber paid for his corner, but the sum was of importance to the dock labourer and his wife.

"Sally," said the old man feebly, "bring us a drink o' water, little 'un. I'm uncommon dry."

"Sally ain't in," the woman answered, snappishly. "Pore little dear, she've got to arn her livin', *she* have. She can't stay at 'ome a-doin' nuffink, *she* can't."

"I meant no offence, mum," said the feeble, frightened old man, as he turned over his face to the wall.

The woman gave him no answer. For one thing, she had pins in her mouth; for another, she could not afford to waste time in talk. When she had refastened her work to her knee, she was about to begin her monotonous stitching again, but Hoity Toity hooked Stoppum round her wrist. She looked up, saw nothing, and fancying that she had got the cramp, began to shake her right hand, and rub it with the other.

Whilst she was thus engaged, Hoity Toity pointed with Easum, in his mysterious invisible, most plainly visible manner, to her baby. The



little thing, a quadruped a minute before, had risen, so to speak, on its hind legs, and proud of its novel biped position, was drumming with all its might upon its prop, the old man's shoulder—drumming, and crowing, and lisping "Da-da!"

In a second—you know Hoity Toity can do anything—the woman saw herself a little girl, hundreds of miles away from London, toddling out to meet her father, lisping "Da-da! Da-da!" clapping her hands, and holding out her arms to be swung, by magic, as it seemed to her, all the way up to that tremendous height, her father's shoulder. The woman did not know where her father was—whether he was dead or alive; but when she thought that he might be lying weak and lonely like the old bone-grubber, her heart softened to the old man.

She got him his drink of water, she gave him a piece of bread for his breakfast, she put the baby on his bed to cheer him with its pretty pranks and prattle; and when she went back to her work, she felt so cheered herself, and Hoity Toity, sitting unseen beside her, so helped her on with Easum,

that she soon found that she had gained instead of losing time by getting up to wait on the old bone-grubber.

In the room above the dock labourer's sat another lonely old man. The people with whom he lodged being absent at their work, and their children at their out-door play, he had the room to himself. He was a cripple and deformed, a maker of cheap fancy boxes. The two or three books on the mantel-shelf, and the map hung over it, belonged to him. His head was too large for his body, but it was not a foolishly heavy head. There was a mobility in his face, and an insight in his eyes, very different from the general expression of faces in Muckmammon's Rents. For the most part these were two: the stupidly hopeless look of a half-starved, overdriven cab-horse; and the savage look of a bull-dog that gets well fed enough now and then to be ready to fly at the first plump-looking thing it sees when it is forced to go on short commons.

But the cripple's greater sense did not seem to make him any happier than his neighbours. His

mouth was puckered into a peevish protest against his bad fortune. And yet there was a half-smothered kindly look in the deformed little man's face, as if he would be very fond of any people that would let him be fond of them.

When Hoity Toity looked in upon Humpy—that was the name the boxmaker went by in Muckmammon's Rents—he was resting for a minute or two from his box-making, sitting thinking in his chair.

You and I could only have guessed at what he was thinking about, and most likely, five times out of six, should have guessed wrong; but Hoity Toity could understand Humpy's thoughts as well as if he had spoken them aloud; far better than we could have understood them even then, because if Humpy *had* spoken them aloud, he would have left out or put in something (without *meaning* to be false), and so have puzzled us still.

This, then, is what Hoity Toity heard Humpy think—he had not much time to sit thinking *only*, but you can think as much in a minute as it would take an hour or two to say as you would like to

have it said ; and besides, you can go on thinking when you are only working with your fingers, on work to which your fingers have got quite accustomed :—

“Why was I ever born ?” thought Humpy. “It wasn’t my fault. I wasn’t asked whether I wanted to be born. Of course, I couldn’t be asked before I *was* I. And ever since, as soon as I can remember, I’ve been made little of, and fun of, by everybody. If I’d had a mother, it might have been different. They say mothers are fondest of their children when they’re ugliest and weakest. I don’t know anything about that. I never had a mother. Of course, though, I must have had, but I don’t remember her, so it’s all the same to me. Father, I know, wasn’t overfond of me. He was ashamed of me—that’s what father was. And brothers and sisters too, all except little Sally that died, though she was the prettiest of the lot. She’d cry when the others made game of me, and she’d take my part. Because she was so pretty, they minded her, though she wasn’t near so big as me. I used half to hate her for being so pretty, when I

was so ugly, and for her being able to keep the others off from teasing me for a bit, though she was only a little girl, ever so much younger than me ; if I'd had my proper limbs and strength, I shouldn't have wanted poor little Sally to stand up for me. Poor little Sally! She was the only one that ever really loved me. And I loved little Sally, that I did, though I did half hate her sometimes, because I could see plain enough that it was just because I was such an object that she made so much of me. Poor little Sally! Since she was put in the pit-hole, as she used to call it, I've had no one to be fond of me anyhow. Everybody has made little of me since then. And yet I don't see *why*. I've earned my own living, poor as it is, better than a good many that have got the full use of their limbs. And I've taught myself reading and writing, and cyphering, and geography, and things they don't even know the names of. And yet they look down on me. I've got no one to think anything of me, or care a rap about me, so long as I pay my lodgings. If I didn't pay *them*, I should be precious soon, turned out. I wish I was dead.

There's nobody in the world, so long as I'd paid my lodgings, that would mind half-a-farthing if I was dead. There's nobody thinks anything about me, except My—self!”

Humpy's self-pity had so excited him that the little shell he was going to fit in to the row of little shells with which he was decorating a glove-box, slipped from his fingers, and rattled down upon the roof of the transept of the Crystal Palace in the middle of the box-lid. If the roof had been glazed, like the reality, instead of being merely painted, it would have been cracked ; since Humpy, when he found the shell slipping, sent it down with a spiteful thud on the rough representation of the goldenly-gleaming, curiosity-filled, and green and flowery-beauty surrounded building which Humpy had never been able to afford to visit. In his lonely grieving over his loneliness, Humpy almost shouted the last word of his complaint—“ My-self.”

Under any circumstances, Humpy's room, small though it was, was so bare of furniture that, when a single person raised his voice in it, it was likely to answer with some kind of slurred echo ; but Hoity

Toity was at hand—as he always is, though oftenest we are too stupid to find him out—when Humpy half-shouted “My-self!” and the walls of the room distinctly answered “Self!”

Humpy was startled by the emphasis which the walls threw into “Self!”

“After all,” he said aloud, but taking care not to talk *too* loud, “*have* I cared for anybody except myself? I talk as if nobody cared for me—and it’s true, so far as I see; but perhaps it ain’t their fault. I should like folks to care for me a bit, but, now I come to think on it, I can’t say that I ever did much to show ’em so. The only one I ever did really care much about—and that was half selfish, too, because she cared such a lot about me, and her I half hated because I could see so plain why it was that she cared for me so much—was poor dear dead little Sally.”

Hoity Toity is very fond of using children to teach grown-up people: very small “monitors” and monitresses are employed in Hoity Toity’s school.

To teach Humpy, freshly remembering his dead







little Sally, Hoity Toity called up a live little Sally—the little girl to whom, in her absence, the old bone-grubber had appealed for a drink of water.

“If your kittle’s on, mother ’ll thank you kindly for a drop o’ boilin’ water—our fire’s out,” said the little girl.

Pleased at being able to confer a favour on any one, Humpy swung on his crutches to the fire, took off his kettle, and filled the jug which the little girl had brought.

“What’s your name, my dear?” asked Humpy.

“Well, that *is* comikul,” the little girl answered. “You lived here all this time, and not know who I am! I’m Sally as lives right under ye.”

Little Sally was very much like his memory of his dead sister, and Humpy began to feel ashamed of himself.

“Do you like playthings, Sally?” he asked.

“Oh, *I* hain’t no time for playthings,” Sally answered, loftily; “I’m out sellin’ most all day long, but my little sister Jenny do.”

Humpy was handy with his fingers, and out of

his scraps of wood made little sister Jenny a doll's cradle.

She had no doll to put in it, but a doll, too, of a rough kind, Humpy managed to cut out for her, and dressed it gaily in a blue paper frock with a newspaper shawl.

Little Jenny was so pleased with her presents that, at odd times, Humpy went on making toys for her and the children of the people with whom he lodged, and other little children in the Rents. Instead of hooting him now when he made his appearance out of doors, the little folks ran up to him as fowls run up to be fed, and they stumped up the stairs singly, in twos and threes, and by the half-dozen together, and kept him company as he sat at work. Both Humpy and the children were far happier than they had been before. That is Hoity Toity's favourite plan—to make one person happy by getting him to make another person happy.

Sometimes Humpy told the little ones stories, whilst the very little ones sat solemnly sucking their thumbs till their patience was exhausted,

when Humpy lent them his crutches to play at "ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross," &c. There were very merry gatherings in the room that had seemed as dull as a dungeon to Humpy before Hoity Toity put it into his head to make friends with the little ones; and the dock-labourer and his wife, and the old bone-grubber, though they used to pretend to grumble about the "racket overhead," were cheered by it nevertheless.

Fun, especially harmless fun, was a very scarce commodity in Muckmammon's Rents. One night, when the dock-labourer's wife went up to Humpy's room to bring down her little girls, she said to him, as he sat with children at his feet, children on both sides of him, little Jenny on his knee, and children climbing up the back of his chair and playing bo-peep between the legs—

"Yours is a precious n'isy school, master; it's all play and no work."

She said it half-surly, because she was fagged out, and had a bad headache. If Hoity Toity had not whispered something to Humpy, perhaps he

might have felt angry at being scolded by a woman whose children he had been trying to amuse. But Hoity Toity did whisper, and after that, though he did not give up the play, Humpy introduced work into his school. He taught his children reading, writing, and arithmetic—even the smallest amongst them to lisp, “Twinkle, twinkle, little star,” and so on; he read them bits out of his books that he thought they would understand; and they relished their play and his funny stories all the more, because they were not always at play or hearing funny stories.

Humpy no longer wished he had never been born; on the contrary, he gave a party on his birthday. Oranges were forty a shilling then, and he was extravagant enough to regale his young friends with sixpenn’orth.

Each would have gladly given him a birthday present, but they had nothing in the world to give—except kisses. Jenny, and the other little girls, gave him plenty of those; mature Sally, as a rule, thought kissing babyish, but even she on this occasion stooped to the frivolity.

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Humpy was a happy little man when he went to bed that night.

So you see that Hoity Toity finds his way even into Muckmammon's Rents, and though a clear sunbeam scarcely ever falls upon their dingy walls, Hoity Toity, shining outwards from the hearts he has got into, can brighten up their darkest room.

## CHAPTER X.

### *IN A LIGHTHOUSE.*

**N**OWADAYS, I believe, an English or Scottish lighthouse, out at sea, is never left to the care of two keepers only; but it was not so always. The lighthouse I am going to tell you about stood on a heap of rocks nearly a dozen miles from the nearest land. All round about there were other rocks, sometimes just showing above the sea like porpoises, but oftener quite buried by the billows that boiled over them.

In very fine weather the top of the lighthouse rocks was above water, and the keepers could ramble about in the little space round the foot of the lighthouse, taking care not to tumble off, just as if they had been walking on a table. They could fish then for the cod and haddan, dock ling

and whiting and lobsters, that might sometimes be found in the cranny-creeks through which the fierce cross-currents generally rattled about loose big blocks of rock as you might rattle about mere marbles ; or they could take a shot at a seal, a gull, a gannet, a guillemot, or a puffin.

But for the most part, the wild waves roared over the foundation of the lighthouse, sending their spray in a curve over its lantern ; sometimes surging up bodily scores of feet, and threatening to stave in its windows, in spite of the stout storm-shutters and the double glass. Weltering waters, flying foam, rain, hail, snow, seabirds, hurried along like scraps of white paper ; a rare ship struggling hard in its distress to give as wide a berth as possible to the dreadful rocks, the shooting gleam and trembling glimmer of their warning light—these, sometimes for weeks together, were the only outside sights which the lighthouse keepers beheld during the dark day and the darker howling night. They were as cut off from any other human creatures, as if they had been planted on a burnt-out volcano in the moon.



But Hoity Toity was in the lighthouse. *He had built it*, and when after sunset its light flashed out into the gathering blackness, the storm-tossed felt that Hoity Toity was looking at them, and blessed Hoity Toity.

When the two keepers of whom I am about to write first went to the lighthouse, they were very friendly together. By day they fished and shot and cooked and ate and drank and smoked and scrubbed and scoured and burnished in perfect harmony. At night they cheerfully relieved each other in their turn-and-turn-about four-hours watches.

It was exceptionably fine weather. For a whole week a day did not dawn on which they could not see the distant land ; they had a visit from a party of pleasure-takers ; white sails flecked the unwontedly blue sea in unusual abundance—some of the ships that passed closer than usual had st'u'n'sails set. Every day at low tide the causeway leading to the landing-place could be seen, and the keepers could descend, backwards like bears, the metal ladder, fastened to the solid granite basement of

the lighthouse, which led from their "front-door" to their "playground."

They were new to each other, and so each had a fresh listener to his old yarns, and fresh yarns to listen to. They did not feel imprisoned; and when worse weather came, so long as it was not bad enough to threaten to keep them on the rock beyond their time, they still continued friends. For out-at-sea lighthouses nowadays four keepers are employed, who shift in turn, so that there are always three on the rock and one on the land, but at this lighthouse two men went on duty at the same time for a spell of six weeks. But seven weeks, eight weeks, passed, and Jackson and Graham were still confined to the rock.

The winds howled ceaselessly, the wild waters roared on without a moment's lull, dashing against the lighthouse as if they were determined, though it was founded on a rock, and itself made of thousands of tons of rock cunningly cemented and clamped together with metal, to sweep it before them in ruin. Massive as it was, it sometimes seemed to give a little shiver, as if it

feared secretly that its enemies might possibly prevail.

Day in the lighthouse was almost drearier than the night, for at night the flashing star at the top of the tower cheered and warmed the blackness, but not a blink of sunlight could be seen throughout the whole of the grey wild day, and yet the storm-shutters had always to be kept closed.

The ninth, the tenth week, passed, and Hoity Toity was grieved to see that Jackson and Graham were no longer friends. Each snapped when the other called him to take his watch at night.

"You have waked me too soon," each said, and each would have liked to add, "I must slumber again."

By day they snarled at each other when they were obliged to be together, and when they were not, they sulked in different rooms; taking the trouble to climb up and down ever so many ladders, on the wrong side, so to speak, in order to get as far as possible out of each other's way.

They had nearly a dozen floors between them

to choose from, and when a snug bedroom and a cosy sitting-room were included amongst these, it certainly did seem very absurd that one man should go and growl to himself in the coal-cellar, and the other in the oil-scented lantern.

Hoity Toity thought it not only very absurd, but also very wicked. Still something worse was to come.

When fourteen weeks had gone by, and the lighthouse-keepers were still utterly cut off from the land, these two men, instead of doing their best to cheer themselves by doing their best to cheer each other, grew to hate the sight of each other's faces, the sound of each other's voices, even the very creak of each other's boots. Jackson wished that he could get rid of Graham, and Graham had the same wish about Jackson.

It seems strange, doesn't it? but when people, who do not belong to one another, are *compelled* to keep one another's company exclusively day after day, they are almost sure, after a time, to begin to dislike one another, unless they put great command on themselves, and try very hard to be cheerful

and polite. Passengers in a ship bound to Australia, who had become quite a happy family before they crossed the line, have been known to begin to wrangle before they doubled the Cape, and to quarrel fiercely between the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Otway. The etiquette which is kept up on board a man-of-war, is intended to keep down the growth of the feeling I am referring to—to prevent familiarity from breeding contempt. Of course, it is very sad, as well as very silly, that people should behave so, but so they *do* behave, and now you will understand how it was that Jackson and Graham felt towards each other as they did.

And even worse still came. The winds and waters still rushed, ever raving, past the lighthouse that defied them proudly in spite of its secret shiver. Nearly four months had gone by, and still the keepers had had no communication with the shore. Provisions were wasting away, and each kept a jealous eye on the other, to see that he did not take more than his share. Dark thoughts began to flit through their minds. Each wished that

he could get rid of the other *anyhow*, and each, knowing that he wished this, took secret precautions that *he* might not be got rid of anyhow. When both were awake, they watched each other furtively, but with a ceaseless ferocious vigilance, out of the corners of their eyes. Each, before he went to sleep, barricaded himself in his bed. The weather showed no signs of abatement.

"How long could things go on as they were going?" each of the silently savage men began to ask himself, and to excuse himself for the wicked answer he silently gave himself, by saying silently, that he was only thinking of doing to the other what the other was thinking of doing to him.

I cannot tell you how sad all this made Hoity Toity, because his sorrow was *inexpressible*. But he still stayed in the tower which he had built. Though the two keepers had come to hate each other so, neither neglected his lighthouse duties.

Jackson one day saw the ragged, straggling vanguard of a great army of mist galloping in from windward, and went out on to the balcony to make sure that the fog-bell was not too rusty to do its

duty. He was almost carried off his feet by the wind, and as he clung to the iron rails, some evil being whispered to him—whispered, and yet so as to be heard in the midst of all that rushing roar—

“Call up Graham to help you, and then—you can swear the wind did it, and you’ll have food enough left to last till you’re relieved, and you’ll be able to do your duty all the same, because if you rest all day, you’ll be able to watch all night.”

Jackson was struggling back to the doorway, in obedience to this wicked whisper, when the wind dashed two blown-away land birds at his feet. (Hoity Toity had allowed them to be blown away.) In another instant they would have been blown out to sea again, had not Jackson, though he *was* thinking of treacherously murdering his comrade, instinctively caught them in his hat. As he did so, he noticed that one covered the other with its wings. They were two of Hoity Toity’s little teachers. Jackson’s heart gave a wince, as if it had been stabbed; and with the birds in his hand, he went down to Graham, and confessed the evil thoughts that he had had, and Graham confessed

the evil thoughts that *he* had had ; and then the men clutched hands, and vowed that, whatever might happen, each would be true to the other.

All day long the fog-bell tolled, and all night long too, as the reconciled keepers sat together watching the flashing light which the dense mist blurred. But an hour or two after dawn the mist rolled away, and the sunshine sparkled brightly on the still swollen but subsiding waters. The wind had gone down, and before noon the little yawl with their "relief" had arrived. Before evening Jackson and Graham had landed, taking with them Hoity Toity's little teachers. They took charge of them turn-and-turn-about in their cottages, and—still continuing mates—carried them back to the lighthouse in joint charge when they returned to their home in the wild sea. The birds sang there as merrily as on shore, and the men blessed Hoity Toity when they listened to the cheery notes of the little peacemakers.



## CHAPTER XI.

### *IN PRISON.*

**S**OLDIERS, fierce bearded men in big boots and steel caps and breastplates, were quartered in the villages that had once been so peaceful, and rode about the country committing all kinds of cruelty. They trod down crops in wanton mischief, they carried off sheep and oxen, they harried poultry yards, they hamstrung horses, they burnt down barns, they stalked into houses, pocketed money, and jewels, and plate, helped themselves to the daintiest meat and wine they could find, and then sat down to carouse by fires they had made out of the costliest furniture hacked to pieces with their swords. They shot unarmed men down like mad dogs, they tied women to stakes and left them for the tide to

drown. They put people on redhot gridirons, hung them up by the thumbs to trees, and pitched them into quarry-ponds. They crushed men's legs with mallets and wedges, and fastened lighted matches between women's fingers. They took so many prisoners that there was not room for them in the prisons—they were locked up in the churchyards, with nothing to cover them, and scarcely anything to eat. Scores of the prisoners were beheaded, or hanged, drawn, and quartered. Dead men's heads and hands were horribly common, nailed on to town-gates.

In that awful time there lived a man whose name was Andrew, who had a wife whose name was Jean. They had a couple of children, a little Andrew and a little Jean.

One day when Andrew was working in the little croft that sloped up to the moor behind the house, with little Andrew and little Jean playing at working beside him, the children raised a cry, and Andrew looking up, saw his wife hurrying down towards him through the heather.

"The soldiers are out in search of you," she

gasped as soon as she had recovered breath enough to speak, when she drew near—"they are close at hand—hide ! hide !"

Andrew could do no good to his wife and children by not hiding; if he hid so as to baffle the soldiers' search, he would be spared to go on working for them. So he made up his mind to follow his wife's advice, but where *was* he to hide? There was not time to make a hole and build him up in the peatstack.

"The meal-barrel!" cried Jean, hurrying her husband to the cottage. Andrew squeezed himself into the barrel, Jean clapt on the lid, and swept down some cobwebs upon it, and then taking little Jean and Andrew by the hand went to the door of the cottage. They had hardly stood there a minute before the troopers came over the crest of the hill, lazily cantering through the pink and purple heather. They felt sure of their prey, and so were not hurrying themselves.

When they had got full sight of her, Jean, seizing her children in her arms, scurried across the croft, and over its dry stone wall, into the waste

beyond. She wanted to divert the soldiers' attention from the cottage, and for a time she succeeded. They came at a thundering gallop after her.

"I have you," said one of the ruffians, leaning from the saddle and clutching her by the shoulder. "We've got the bonnie moorhen and the chicks. The old cock can't be far off."

They were so sure of this that, at first, they did not treat Jean or the children roughly when she refused to tell them where her husband was. They beat about the moor, watching her, as they thought very knowingly, to get a hint as to the whereabouts of Andrew; and Jean thought there was no harm in leading them astray by pretending to look very anxious the farther they got from the cottage.

They began to think themselves "warm," as you children say at hide-and-seek, when they drew near what a golf-player, I think, would call a "hazard"—a furze-fringed hollow in the moor. They grew warm in another sense when they had searched the hollow, and not found Andrew. Their character as bloodhounds was at stake, and they

felt that they had been at fault through the amiable artfulness with which poor Jean had trailed a red-herring over the scent. They very brutally hurried her and her children back to the cottage, from which she had not been able to lure them far enough to enable her husband to escape.

They ran their swords into every place in which they thought it likely that Andrew could be hiding. It was only the cobwebs on it that kept them from looking into the meal-barrel.

"He can't be in that," said the leader of the party, giving the barrel a kick.

When they had searched the homestead fruitlessly their small stock of patience and good temper was exhausted, and they began to threaten Jean and—a threat she cared far more about—the children with torture, if she would not reveal her husband's hiding-place.

She still refused to do so, and one ruffian struck her a blow so brutal that she could not repress a cry. At the sound of his wife's voice Andrew sprang from the barrel, and knocked the scoundrel

down. The next minute he was felled himself with a sword-cut in his head.

The soldiers would not allow Jean to bind up the wound ; they would not permit Andrew to take leave of his wife and children. They tied his arms behind him, fastened another rope round his neck, and consigned him to the custody of the dragoon he had knocked down.

With the blood pouring down his face, Andrew had to run beside this fellow's horse, and when he failed to keep up with it, the trooper belaboured him with his sword, taking no special care that it should only be the flat of the blade his prisoner felt. At last Andrew dropped, and for some time was dragged along the road, bumping over the stones, by his cowardly-cruel custodian. When Andrew became insensible, he was taken up, and flung across the horse's crupper like a sack of flour. Then the dragoons cantered on, laughing and swearing. By and by they came to a castle standing on a grassy, rocky mound beside the sea ; and into one of its cells Andrew was tumbled neck and crop by the dragoon who had charge of him, with

a kick and a curse, because his blood had stained the horse and its harness.

When Andrew came to himself, he found that he was lying, bruised, blood-clotted, and aching all over, in a dark, damp place, about which slimy things were hopping and crawling. He could hear the wind moaning, the sea dashing and splashing outside, but not a single ray of the dimmest light could he see. Utterly weary, and yet kept awake by pain and the strange novelty of his position, he spent the greater part of the night in tossing from side to side on his miserable bed—the miry floor—thinking of his wife and children left without any one to fend for them; but Hoity Toity touched his throbbing temples and strained eyelids, now with Easum and anon with Stoppum, and at last Andrew slept.

Hoity Toity woke him in the morning with the softly tickling finger-tip of a long, warm, bright sunbeam; and, looking up, Andrew saw a little, iron-barred, square of blue sky. A merrily singing bird had perched upon the bars, and the world no longer seemed utterly hopeless to Andrew,

In proof whereof, he began to feel hungry and thirsty. He had to feel hungry and thirsty for a long while ; but at last a little bit of oatcake and a bowl of water were thrust in to him, as if he were a mangy dog whose master wouldn't quite starve it before he shot it.

Andrew was often half-famished, but Hoity Toity put it into his head to save a crumb or two of his oatcake for the bird that every morning lighted on his bars ; and at last the bird became so tame that, after it had fluttered down into the cell, and walked about squeamishly on the muddy floor, it would take the crumbs almost out of his hand.

Hoity Toity, too, made Andrew get fond even of the hopping and crawling things in his dungeon—to wonder that he ever thought them ugly—to look upon them as friends.

If it had not been for the thought of Jean and little Jean and little Andrew left unprotected, Andrew could sometimes have gone to sleep almost contentedly, in spite of his miserable couch, to the lullaby of the sougning wind and the slumberous breaking of the waves ; but Hoity Toity



looked after him then, too, and looked in upon him in the clear gleam of a star calmingly shining through the bars.

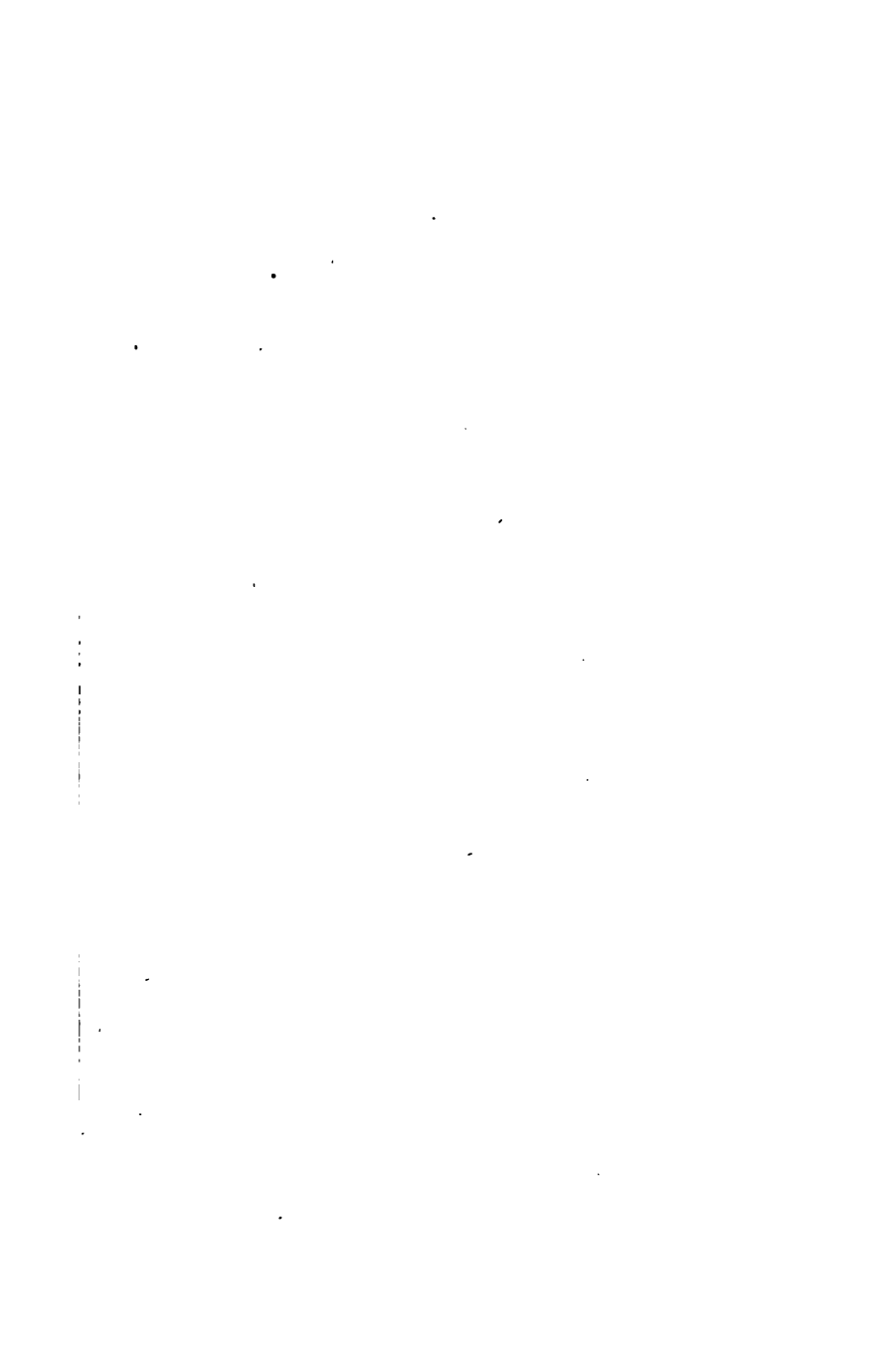
When the dreary winter had passed, Andrew found that Hoity Toity had given him another gift. His bird had brought him a seed in return for his oatcake, and this seed was opening into a flower. As the weeks went by, it gained three blossoms, and as they pensively smiled upon him in his prison, Andrew pleased himself by calling them Jean and little Jean and little Andrew.

In the spring Andrew's bird brought its mate to visit him, and then, so long as he had any crumbs of oatcake left to give them, the two birds used to go backwards and forwards like shuttles between their nest and his cell with, or in quest of, food for their young. He often stinted himself for the sake of their company. But at last the birds went away, and his flower faded, and the dreary winter came again.

Hoity Toity, however, did not allow Andrew to be desolate. The little daughter of the jailer came down one day with her gruff father to see

the squalid prisoner, and took such compassion on him that a friendship sprang up between them. She often came again, and he wiled away the heavy hours when she was away in carving rough little toys for her out of the half rotten wood with which the floor of his cell was littered, and thanks to her, the gruff jailer, who was not gruff to her, but almost her slave, granted poor Andrew such indulgences as he durst.

Andrew was still quartered in the same cell, but the jailer allowed him to come out now and then and walk with the little girl in the castle yard. His food was more plentiful, and in the bitterest winter weather he was allowed a fire ; and when the spring came back again the order for his release came with it. The little girl helped him to trim his beard and wash and mend his clothes, and kissed and cried over him when he bade her good-bye, with a heart full of joy because he was returning to those who had missed him so long from the moorland cottage.



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